

SCALPEL'S EDGE

Scalpel AT THE CROSS
A Christian Medical Mission
to the Peruvian Amazon

A GIFT OF LIGHT, HOPE AND SURGERY TO PERU

FIRST QUARTER 2017 | ISSUE 21

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“ I believe these why-things should probably provoke more curiosity, wonder, and anticipation. ”

—Peter A. Cole, MD

¿WHY?

by Peter A. Cole, MD — President, Scalpel At The Cross



How often are you stuck on this question? Me, every day, every hour, constantly. I could throw 10 whys at God in the next 10 seconds. Books and theses are written to probe the divine “why”. God places us in certain situations, allows some things and causes others to happen, often without the mercy of an explanation, for months, or ever. Do you get angry or just perplexed? Does your spirit accept or fight? Do you embrace or veer left?

Does it give you resolve or make you want to quit? “Oh my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.” Psalm 22: 2

I believe these why-things should probably provoke more curiosity, wonder, and anticipation. The problem with anger and fret, impulse or disillusionment,

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¿WHY?



even resolve or a decision to veer left, is that these responses reflect a man-centric perspective. Such reactions are inward; they place me first; they seek control of the uncontrollable. On the other hand, if we reacted to our whys with curiosity, wonder, and anticipation, the implication would be that we are seeking beyond our motivations, indeed outward in faith. As Christians we should anticipate, as in hope in our circumstances, especially the hard ones, because we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). How strong is my faith? Do you know God specializes in chaos and the impossible, or better said that our chaos is a part of His perfect order?

In the following article (Seasons), you will learn that our dear Porches have decided to return stateside, back to Minnesota. In that article, Dan shares more about the family's season in Peru and new stirrings. I do not know why God called Dan and Laurie Porch to our ministry for two years, when it took two years to prepare for the journey. I cannot understand why a twenty-year vision turns to a two-year bridge, nor do I know how wide this river will be. I do not know the Porches' future, let alone Scalpel's, as it relates to this sweet slice of the mission we have come to love. Why? What I want to do with you, is wonder with great anticipation about how God will continue building this bridge....and pray with patience.

Another side of my reaction to the "why," is gratitude. We are indebted to Dan, Laurie and Lyndi Porch for an amazing two years of ministry with Scalpel. This dear family gave us a taste of full-time presence in Pucallpa, and the difference

was clear. Rather than the itinerant mission teams, when we took 3-4, 10-day trips per year, launching in for surgery and blasting out with a couple dozen operated patients in our rear view mirror, the Porches brought comfort and connection to our formula--all year long! Laurie the nurse and Dan the Pastor provided effective follow-up, held hands that needed holding, prayed with patients and hospital workers with a message that, "We have not forgotten you." They brought questions to our attention, and nurtured relationships with the hospital personnel in the trenches of the mission where the complications and cures of operating manifest. In addition, the Porches made the surgical team transitions almost seamless for the attendees, making preparations perfect and well scaled, providing worship and counsel to team members, making ministry in the moment as teams focused on executing the medical work at hand. For example, before the Porches, meals, car rentals, keys, mobile phones, repairs and logistics of all kinds, were essentially worked out when teams arrived. In addition to keeping such matters relatively invisible, there were two other major transitions that were brokered by Dan. These actions included the consummation of Peruvian legal documents, as well as the transition of the patient follow-up program from our beloved

Dra. Rosa to Isaac Mendoza, our newest Scalpel team member who provides prayerful ministry and rehabilitation to our patients, tracks them and documents them into our CrossCare database. These massive endeavors have been done with amazing grace and would have been impossible without Dan's behind-the-scenes support. Indeed the Porches have prepared for our next stages with vigor and a great sense of responsibility.

Perhaps the clearest learning of the gift of the Porches was the ministry which they fulfilled to local missionaries, from South American Mission, Mil Palmeras Church, The Bible Swiss Mission, and to native pastors in the community. Time and again from every direction, we heard that Dan was an amazing resource and gift in pastoral terms, that Laurie filled a vital vacuum of teaching need at SAM Academy, and that Lyndi was a blessing beyond measure to the kid-kingdom of Pucallpa, through her praise and worship band, to her joyful spirit. The Porches will be missed!

Why did God grant us this beautiful family for a wink of time? I don't know, but I am curious, and I wonder with great anticipation for what God has in store for Scalpel At The Cross. ✝





SEASONS

By Dan Porch

Seasons ... are gifts from God. The water behind our home here in the jungle is receding. The rainy season was strong this year. Torrential rains that lasted for days. We had a week of rain ... seeing the sun once. And it is this blessed gift of rain coupled with the later heat of the sun that brings the deep growth to the jungle of Peru. We all live in seasons.

The tree behind our house has seasons. They are not predictable. Overnight the tree will blossom white with a sweet fragrance that drowns any other smell. The bees crowd around the tree for a day and then they are gone ... along with the blossoms and the smell. The season of fragrance has passed.

Scalpel At The Cross has gone through a season ... a season of transition ... and our family has had the opportunity to walk through this season with the Scalpel family. There have been joys and difficulties ... times of giving and times of learning with others ... that season for us is coming to a close.

In the summer of 2015 Laurie, Lyndi, and I prepared to embark on an untried adventure with the Scalpel family. We became the first expatriate missionaries of Scalpel to come and live in the Pucallpa area with a broad purpose of caring for

our facilities, building relationships, and preparing for medical teams. For our family it was another season of beginnings ... seeking to develop and establish a foundation for a vision that will continue to grow in this part of the world where medical care can be a means into the lives of families who need the total care of the gospel of our Lord.

The fragrance of this short season is being enjoyed as we watch God

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—Dan Porch

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SEASONS



developing the small Peruvian team that will continue to build upon this foundation. Our former Peruvian director had built many excellent bridges and paths for ministry, and our current director is building on the ongoing vision of seeing short-term medical teams provide, through surgery, hope and light to people who have yet to know the joy of Jesus.

Each season in our life has a beginning and an end ... but that does not mean the work to which we were given is finished. Here in Peru it simply means that our part in the development of others is coming to a close, and we are asked to move on to another place of ministry. There are pieces in the Scalpel structure here in Peru that still need some answers when the Porch family is gone, but the focus on our patients and the outcomes we want to see are in capable hands that are folded

in prayer and looking to the Lord even as outreach, follow up, and relationship building continue. We are excited to watch God develop this ministry here in Pucallpa over the next few years.

Each medical team that has come during our tenure here has been a short season ... like the tree in our back yard ... of fragrance and opportunity. What a joy to participate with folks who leave families and vacations to come and share their expertise by operating on folks who could never afford or find the kind of care these medical professionals are giving. The opportunity has been ours to pour out the fragrance of Christ on these medical professionals through varied ways of serving their needs. We have given thanks for each one of these teams in their short season with us knowing that God is working through them here and in them even as they return to their homes with eyes and hearts often challenged.

After these teams depart begins a season of follow up with each patient. These have been sweet times of relationship building

both with families and with the medical staff with whom we work. Here is often the heart of Scalpel's ministry as stitches are removed ... progress is noted and discussed ... and times of prayer are begun that often lead us back to their homes even before the next medical follow up. It is this season of follow up that we are developing and will continue to develop in the years to come as churches and other medical staff who are believers begin to help us care for these families pointing them to the only solution (salvation) in life ... Jesus! Here in this very religious city, we envision and proclaim Jesus with these in their homes through prayer and connection to local congregations of believers. It is after a year of connection with each patient that we release them completely into the care of those who have come alongside of them. Our season with them has hopefully brought them to a place of abundance.

We give thanks for this brief season with Scalpel here in Pucallpa. And we look forward to the working of God as he builds on what he has started in this jungle town. Even now as the waters are receding back behind our house, we can sense this season in our life coming to a close. ✝

Most readers know that Scalpel At The Cross provides orthopaedic surgery to Peruvians, but few people outside the field of orthopaedics realize the excruciating level of detail contained within that concept. Fixing bones obviously requires metal plates and screws. It implicitly also requires plates of the correct shape and size; screws for that specific plate of the correct length and type; appropriate drill bits; drills; drill batteries; and all the instruments that allow the surgical team to reach the fracture, put and hold the bone in position, close the tissue, and bandage the incision.

Scalpel accomplishes all this with supplies donated by orthopaedic hardware companies, organizations that redirect older medical technology and supplies, and individuals who capture items that would otherwise be discarded from the American health system. This has yielded a mind-bogglingly random collection of orthopaedic technology from the past 50 years. What remains in storage resides in what team members (somewhat) affectionately call Cashibo Storage, and has had sections labeled, "Chaos & Madness" and "Red Hot Mess." Each campaign has the challenge of extracting surgical necessities from



unlabeled plastic trunks, 1960s suitcases, and piles of metal on a table.

The obvious goal of better organization and sustainable systems was historically stymied by the need to meet the immediate demands of each campaign. However, in early 2016, some team members committed specifically to an organizational trip. In combination with the infrastructure improvements (shelves and tool boxes) and epic sorting done by Dan and Laurie Porch, Team Logistics knocked the mess out of Cashibo Storage last July.

TOOL TEAM. BACK AGAIN!

by Jamie Womack

The handpicked strike force consisted of "Boss Lady" (with duct tape in many colors), "New Assistant Boss Lady" (dumped into the deep end of orthopaedics and swimming like a fish), "Ortho Rep 1" (King of the Screws Who Does Like to Dance), "Ortho Rep/Scrub Tech/Embarrassment of Riches", and a "Surgical First Assist" (I Like Systems). All supplies were put in labeled bins. All implants were sorted, labeled, inventoried, and mapped. Instrument trays were built for small and large surgical cases, with their contents inventoried and marked so

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TOOL TEAM. BACK AGAIN!

the trays can be easily and correctly rebuilt after each case. Reference materials were created and an inventory resupply system was proposed.

The trip was a welcome change of pace from the usual frantic rushes to Amazonico Hospital. Some team members were able to spend the whole day in Cashibo with the luxury of a single organizational task. Dr. Cole and Peggy were able to make valuable outreach to hospital staff, community members, and

missionaries. Linda Nite, the “New Assistant Boss Lady”, had a mellow introduction to the equipment side of a campaign and was able to explore some of Pucallpa.

The organizational effort unearthed surprises on all fronts (trochanteric grip plates AND six large lamina spreaders). Knowing available equipment will allow more appropriate surgical decisions, and having better supplies will make surgical preparation and surgeries easier for both

surgeons and tool team members. It also exposed some glaring omissions in our armamentarium, which allows us to work towards filling in those gaps.

Towards the end of our trip, Dr. Cole told me, “I’ll think of you every time I take a piece of equipment from a labeled bin.” While he might do so, the true benefit of this logistics campaign was in my reply to him: “No. You should think of me every time you return a piece of equipment to its proper place.” Hurrah for systems! ✚



A YEAR IN REVIEW

By Peggy Gasior

Looking back on 2016, we are thankful for God’s leading and provision to provide medical and soul ministry in Peru, in our patients, their families, the community of Pucallpa, and our team members.

Scalpel At The Cross completed 2 medical mission trips – one in February and one in September, as well as 1 organizational trip in July. These trips brought together a total of 27 team members, including 4 orthopaedic surgeons, 1 physician assistant, 4 nurses, 3 medical residents, 2 medical students and several other essential

non-medical team members. On our medical trips, we were able to evaluate 92 patients, with 33 patients receiving operative care.

The organizational trip in July was the first of its kind in several years, dedicated to sorting and organizing implants and instrumentation, as well as setting up systems going forward. The September medical trip was the first specialized campaign focusing on total hip replacement procedures.

We are grateful to the many team members, friends and family of Scalpel

who gave their gifts of time, talent, skills, and resources; and all of this medical and surgical care would not be possible without products and supplies consistently provided by many faithful vendors and organizations. It is humbling and also invigorating to join together in these ways to continue pushing forward in the work we have been entrusted with. ✚





PRAISES & PETITIONS

By Nancy Cole

Scalpel offers up much thanksgiving to the Lord for His very consistent protection of our mission in the face of instabilities faced in an ever-changing Peru, as well as protection against the purposes and plans of men that are counter to God's will. This past year we had numerous instances where God divinely intervened in thwarting efforts by local "squatters" to take over our property by illegal means and disrupt medical campaigns (to be of benefit to the impoverished) through hospital strikes and violence. Through it all the Lord has been our safe haven, steadfast rock, and ever-present help in time of trouble. Praise His holy name!

We would ask that you pray for the continued growth in faith, discernment, and commitment of our mission's core leadership/board members (many of them new) as we learn to entrust Scalpel in fullest measure to our great God rather than clinging too fiercely (on a personal level) to her welfare. May we adopt the mindset that in spite of our investment of time and energy, "the ministry of Scalpel At The Cross is His and His alone; we are only instruments in His redemptive hands."

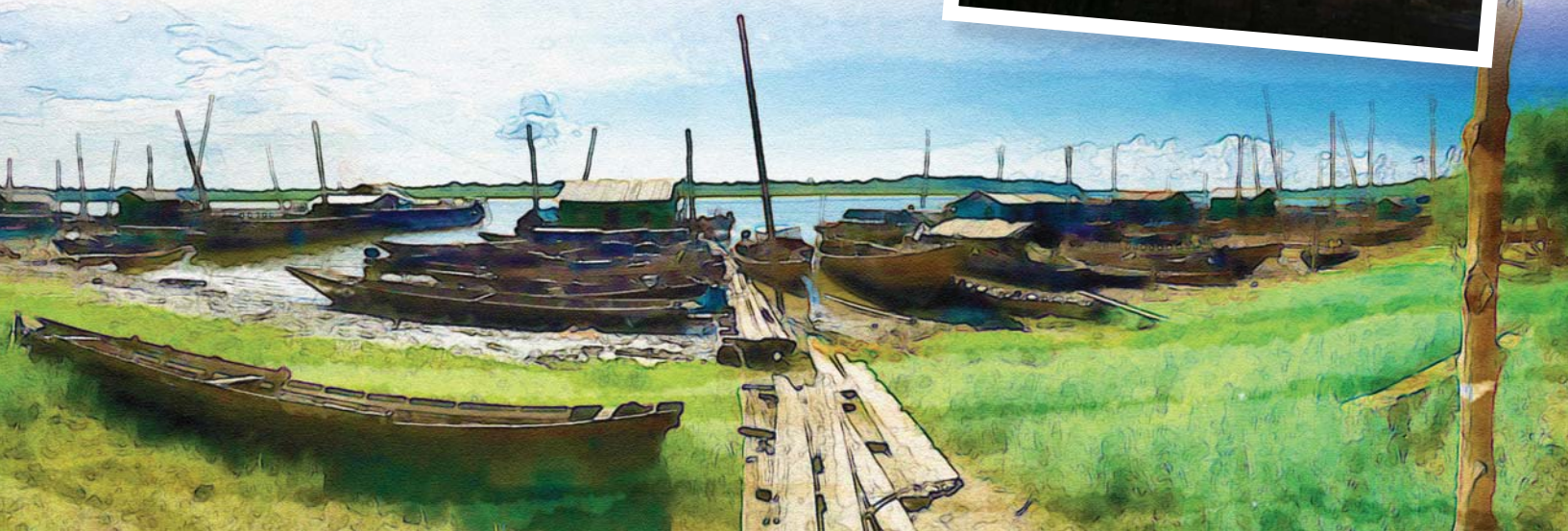
As the Lord wills, we would also request prayer over wisdom and success in recruiting a medical doctor who would be willing to join our mission as an on-site provider of care to the Peruvian people. Our former Peruvian based doctor moved her family to the United States to obtain citizenship this past summer, and we are grateful to have a Peruvian physical therapist working alongside us in care

delivery. We hope to hire an M.D. to work with him to provide medical advice, write prescriptions, etc.

We experienced transition of Scalpel personnel during 2016 and look to have more transition in 2017. How thankful we are amidst the turnover for our Lord's constancy. Towards that end, we would ask for God's hand of favor to be extended our way as we navigate steep learning curves encountered by all in the process.

Most assuredly, we desire to be the sweet aroma of Christ to those patients most

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PRAISES & PETITION

in need of our care for remaining team trips this year in August and November. There are many details to coordinate for each medical campaign as well as orientation and acclimation of our team members to the conditions under which they will be working while in the Amazon rainforest. We pray for servant hearts for each team member, that they might go forth with: strength, stamina, mental grit, perspective, unity, good health, and a confident expectation that the Lord will supply all their needs as they supply the needs of those we are serving.

Lastly, we hope to be inspired by creative and updated means of tapping into potential donor bases for financial support of the mission which would allow for implementation of the initiatives God seems to be placing on our hearts.

May our souls collectively rest in His embrace!!!

On bended knee,
Nancy Cole for the Scalpel Prayer Posse



Support our mission

You may give online at:

<https://e-giving.org/ScalpelAtTheCross>

or contact us at:

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