



Alice posing with me

# THE GROWING NEWS

## Summer 2025

Sam Van Eman  
Resource Specialist, CCO-XD



**"Who needs you to go on this trip?"** That was the question we asked the 13 students we took to Peru last month.

Every student is in relationships, just like you and me. They have roommates, bosses, teachers, friends, siblings, etc. We asked this question because the people on the other end are affected by how we live, and our prayer was for students to return home as a blessing—more mature, more Christlike. *Who might benefit from me being less selfish, more serving; less petty, more forgiving?*

I noticed one student taking over many conversations. The moment someone told a story or made a reference, she would jump in. Often the story-teller would go silent. Eventually, I pulled her aside and asked if she'd be open to a challenge. "For the next 24 hours, whenever you feel the urge to chime in, try asking a question or counting to five-Mississippi before speaking." She paused and then said, "Sam, this behavior of mine has been especially hard on someone I dearly love. Thank you. I accept."

In God's mysterious ways, our growth as disciples may be just what others need (or depending on the case, it may be what stops us from being the harm they *don't* need). In other words, people in our lives need us to address what is not yet whole.

Do we have to go to Peru to do deep work? No, but growth comes more readily when key elements are in place. Here are three:

1. **Being in an unfamiliar environment.** This encourages a higher dependence on God and a higher interdependence on one another. In Peru, our group faced a new language, strange customs, an out-of-the-ordinary schedule, and risk (real and perceived).
2. **Having a sustained period of focus.** This makes us true students—ready for meaningful learning. For three weeks we talked, read, and journaled about loving like Jesus, and for three weeks we put these specific learnings into practice.
3. **Thinking of ourselves as spiritual pilgrims, not tourists.** This shifts us from consumers to receivers.

These students said yes to something better than passport stamps and souvenirs. Will you pray that God's work in them would bear fruit where it matters—in the people who knowingly or unknowingly needed them to go?



**Follow this QR code to our blog where you'll find selected photos, brief student reflections, and—bonus—a play-by-play about Pacha Manca, the all-hands-on-deck meal we cooked in the ground and ate with our hands!**

Thank you for making this ministry possible. So many lives benefit from your prayers and contributions.



Gratefully,



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