

Mexico City Prison Ministry trip Oct 25-28, 2001

I went down for 4 days with my men's bible study group and 4 others down to Mexico city to share God's word and some of our life stories to inmates in the prisons around Mexico City. It was an amazing trip and God was really working in us down there.

We flew down to Mexico City after an early wake up on Thursday morning - our flight from SFO left at 7:30 - and with the extra security in the airports we had to allow about 3 hours! After connecting through LAX we landed in Mexico City around 3:30 in the afternoon... it was my first flight since 9-11... many things had changed in the airports... like we had to take our belts and shoes off at the security checkpoints in front of armed soldiers because the sensor beeped on our belt buckles and shoelace grommets...

I was on one of 3 teams that went down to Mexico - the other teams went off to different prisons around Mexico City and Cuernavaca - a town about 1 1/2 hr from Mexico City. One of the other teams went to donate about 900 pounds of clothing and medical supplies to one of the poor outlying villages... and the people were very poor too ... shirts, underwear, even toothpaste and toothbrushes were greatly needed.

God had so many surprises for us in Mexico City - as we made our way through the prisons, we noticed how almost all the inmates were so open to us and to hear our message. We visited two different cárceles (prisons) in different parts of the city... there was a lot of security - of course - but the missionaries that we joined with were so good about getting us through. We went to different areas of the prisons sharing testimonies and the gospel message. Everywhere we went, so many people wanted to pray to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior! God had really opened their hearts... we would greet the inmates with hugs and handshakes and "Dios te bendiga" (God bless you) afterward. (people in Mexico were so much more affectionate... the equivalent of a handshake would be a handshake, a hug or a couple kisses depending on gender, and another handshake). The inmates were like students ready to soak in our message... they no longer were like murderers and rapists but were like children ready to have their lives changed.

Many of the prisons had churches within their walls - a group of inmates would gather in a corner of the prison and worship and pray together... their singing sounded like the music of heaven - it was so lively and moving! We all got CD's produced at one of the prisons - one of the inmates is a worship leader and the missionaries brought in recording equipment into the prison to record it. The title is "Cantos de Libertad desde la Carcel" (songs of liberty from within the prison). The songs are amazing and the lyrics powerful and from the heart.

I think people start really looking for spiritual things when they are locked away - they have to re-evaluate many of life's important decisions. God had really opened their hearts to us and our ministry. So many of them were ready and eager to accept Jesus on the spot as we ministered to them. In many cases, all we had to do would be to share our life story or some basic scripture verses with them and the Holy Spirit would do the rest - God would meet us more than halfway!

We visited the Fundacion Emanuel church on Sunday - where a bunch of the prison missionaries are based. We could have sung worship songs all morning - the music was so animated and lively! We each got to share a little part of our story with the church... afterward they had a call for everyone that wanted to come up and pray for us - I think all 40-50 members of that congregation ran forward to pray for us! We were swarmed with people laying hands on us and praying for us... so passionately too! I wish our churches in America were like that!

On a lighter note... the city itself had a lot of surprises... people drive wherever there's pavement, every other car was a bright green taxi bug - people pass wherever there is room, people roll their carts trying to sell ladders in the middle of the street, and fire-eaters do their acts on the street corners...

The food was so so good down in Mexico City - the Mexican food was nothing like burritos or chimichangas or otherwise Taco Bell food... some of the best dishes were the pozole and cosomme - like soup with meat, vegetables and rice. And of course you have your Corona with it... or your tequila if you want to really do it

right :-) Chalupas are not eaten - they are the flat-bottomed boats that roam the swamps that make part of the lake-bed of Mexico city. Alambre was another food of choice - it was a meat, cheese, pepper and onion mixture that you roll with your own stack of tortillas... we were hambre hombres for alambre :-) (hambre = hunger in spanish).

There is so much to say... this is only a glimpse of what the trip was like... even though it was only 4 days, God really had a great adventure in store for us. I know they want us to come back again sometime soon... not sure when would be possible yet though. And for a little icing on the cake, as we were flying back, we saw the two volcanoes near Mexico city - 2 snow capped peaks reaching 5700 m high (almost 19000 feet), behind the city as the sun was setting and a near-full moon was rising - an amazing view of God's beauty. We are so blessed to be free where we can enjoy God's creation.