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Serving with Latin America Mission

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Visit to Ciudad Juarez, Mexico & All Nations Seminary

Friends,

A quick update: A week ago I went to Ciudad Juarez, Mexico to give a seminar on spiritual formation to the professors and staff of *All Nations Seminary*. (www.todalasnaciones.net). As you may know, Ciudad Juarez has gained notoriety as a major center of narcotics trafficking, where Mexican drug cartels are warring to gain control of a multimillion dollar illegal drug business. The violence generated by the drug war translated into 3,075 homicides in 2010. Beheadings, attacks on police, and shootings are common in some regions of the city and there are certain sections of the city that are totally dominated by the drug cartels. The population of Ciudad Juarez has had to change their daily routine; most try to return home by 6:00 p.m. and secure themselves inside fortified homes. Public life is limited by fear of kidnapping or random violence. The city has been called "the most violent zone in the world outside of declared war zones." Beset by corruption and the assassination of many of its officers, the government is struggling to maintain Ciudad Juarez's police force, while other officers have quit the force out of fear of being targeted. The Mexican government has sent in the Mexican army whose presence is quite visible, as armed soldiers are posted on street corners and at check points.

The above is a synopsis of what one can find online or see and hear through our U.S. news outlets. But what's not reported on Fox News, CNN or the other major news networks is the valor and faithfulness of many believers who are carrying on under these most trying circumstances. That's what impressed me most during my time in Ciudad Juarez. There in the midst of the darkness and some of the worse expressions of human fallenness—a veritable festival of evil—the light of Christ is shining through his people. And there is where one finds *All Nations Seminary*.

Apart from the violence and corruption of the city in which it is found, the seminary is an interesting story in itself. *All Nations Seminary* is named after a Korean church in Los Angeles, California, which was instrumental in its founding. The current director is a Korean brother, San Wong Lee (among the Mexicans he goes by his Spanish moniker, *Pastor Pablo Lee*). The school boasts nearly 100 fulltime students and runs several extension centers in other large population centers in Mexico.

I spoke six times in two days, Friday and Saturday: the first two sessions were just for professors; in the third session the administration participated. On Friday evening I spoke to the student body, which was a special highlight of my trip; and Saturday morning I spoke in two sessions open to the public. A large number of pastors attended the Saturday sessions, along with their congregational leaders. It was a full house!

Although my time was brief, I was able to hear some amazing stories of faithfulness. One that comes to mind is that of a seminary student who began a Bible study in the Juarez jail (no lack of courage here!). He has 200 inmates studying with him, and has involved professors and students in his ministry. It's revolutionizing the school! Those involved in this ministry told me how it has impacted them to see spiritual hunger and responsiveness of the inmates. I wish that was being reported on Fox News!

I want to thank the many of you who prayed for me before and during my visit to Ciudad Juarez. The Lord kept me safe, and I never felt uneasy about being there. But more importantly, as a teacher and speaker, one notes a tangible difference when those attending a conference are truly listening and participating. It's a mark of the Spirit's work, and it is a consequence of the intercessory prayer offered to the Lord. All I can say is "Thank you, Lord!" and "Gracias" to all of you who prayed for me.

Your Co-Servants in Christ,

Jeff and Barbi