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Greetings from south of the border, where the sky is clear and the air is warm! We are now in the middle of another amazing semester. We have been packing out our campus house at all of our weekly events with students who have found a new, loving home and are interested in serving in the community. We have three great interns who are doing amazing work and 16 student leaders who are devoted to El Pozo and want to grow in their faith and their leadership. In addition, we have a new baby on our team and another one on the way! None of this would be possible without people like you. Thank you so much for your love, encouragement, words of wisdom, belief in God and His work in El Pozo, and for your support.

Much love from the staff at El Pozo, *Mario Avelar, Brent Brannen, Clay & Amanda Cooper, Abril Correa, Nathan & Erin McDade, Heath & Karen Neal, and Courtney Wilson*

FUN AT 10,000 FEET
By Heath Neal

Every semester we take our students on a retreat. In the spring we always go to the beach, but in the fall the location can vary. This year we went back to a familiar place, La Malinche, the fifth-tallest mountain in



Mexico, standing at 14,636 feet. Actually, on a clear day, you can see five of the six tallest mountains in Mexico from our campus house, so it is kind of cool to go visit one of the mountains we see every day.

This retreat was no different than any other in the sense that we loaded up 40 people on a bus and went away for a weekend and had lots of fun and ate lots of food and you know, the usual. However, when the bus showed up (we got a really good deal on the bus this year, almost too good!), it looked like something straight out of the '70s because it was. No air conditioning, no bathrooms. I think at first glance people were like, "What in the world is that?" But appearances are so deceiving. We had more fun on this bus than on any of those nice ones we have taken in the past ... windows down for air, no TV, and great fun driving slowly through the countryside. This was a great start to our weekend. On Friday night we hung out in an extra cabin, playing games, etc. The place we went was cabins on the side of the mountain, approximately 10,000 feet above sea-level. I am personally convinced that oxygen

doesn't work at that height. They assure me that there is oxygen there, but I say if there is, it just doesn't work.

Saturday was filled with talks from a guy named Mambo who really connected well with our students, a rally (think Amazing Race but without oxygen), an incredible game of Frisbee golf, good food, and a cardboard car race. We finished the evening off with a campfire complete with s'mores and our traditional marshmallow fight. Trust me, they are much more fun to throw than they are to eat.



So being at 10,000 feet was cool and fun and a really nice change in pace for us, but I think the best part of the weekend was hearing how the students connected to our speaker. We had several people who were on their first retreat with us. One guy in particular, whom we have been working with for years and is slowly changing his heart, told us that he really connected with the talks and later talked with Mambo about it. God is good and we see His fruit in our students. We were super blessed with a great speaker this retreat. Our prayer for future retreats (please pray this with us) is that God continues to provide Mexican speakers who can connect well with our students and share exactly what God has for them to hear. Thanks so much for making this retreat and all God does here in Puebla possible.

TEACHING MISSIONS?

By Courtney Wilson

One of the things that I love about El Pozo is its focus on and participation in missions – helping, serving, and ministering to those outside of our ministry. Over the years we have sent out many of our own to places all over the world to carry the love of Christ to those in need, physically or spiritually. Sometimes it's only for a week, but often for a few months or even for a year or more. God has worked through each of those who went to touch the lives of the people around them in some way. It has been awesome to welcome them back from those trips and hear all the ways God used them or taught them through the experience. However, as the new semester approached, we looked at the ministry and saw that although we were good at sending people out to other states and countries, we were neglecting the people in need who are living in our backyard. There

wasn't much that we were involved in here in Puebla outside of ourselves. How could we be preaching "go" but not provide the resources to do it or actually be doing it as a community? God lit a fire in us to get connected with the community we live and work in, to meet our neighbors, find out their needs, and use the resources God has blessed us with to bless others. As God was teaching each of us that, we began to impress that on the students and give them opportunities to get involved.

To kick off our new direction, we gave a Tuesday night Bible study talk on "Salt and Light." The talk gave examples of the many chances we have each day to be salt and light to the people we encounter, then challenged the students to find a way they could put the words of Christ into action. We also provided them with the opportunity to be "salt and light" the following week as a group. Instead of our normal Bible study, we went to a halfway house for the night. We served dinner, had a short time of worship with songs and a message, then spent a while talking and listening to those who were staying at the halfway house. It was awesome to watch the students that night. Some jumped in right away serving or chatting with the people. Others had to be encouraged to step out there, but in the end they were all taking part in some way. It was beautiful.

Since that week, we have found an after-school program that the students can be involved in on a regular basis. We go every Monday and Friday to help the kids with their homework, play with them, or just sit around and talk. It is a great opportunity for our students to get into the lives of others, serve, and be a positive influence in the lives of these kids.

We still have a lot to learn about living missions in our daily lives, but our students are actually starting to get it! They are starting to see the need that is right outside their doors and want to help others. This is cool to watch, experience, and be a part of. Pray that we will continue to foster these relationships we have been building with our students and with the community. Please also continue to pray for boldness and opportunities.

FROM 2 TO 3

By Nathan McDade

Asking me to write about our recent experience of having a baby on the mission field reminds me of how my friend Ben once described being asked to preach and teach about Christian marriage: I feel like a guy in a kayak in the middle of some raging river who's just trying to keep from capsizing. In other words, I'm in the middle of figuring it out and trying to keep my head above water, so it's kind of hard to explain right now! But I will try. And to do so, I will focus on the three words that first came to mind as I reflected on the past six weeks or so.

BLESSING. More than anything, this whole process has been a blessing. Before I get to whining and complaining about the difficult parts, I want to make this clear: We are so blessed. Elsa is beautiful and healthy and happy and (we think) smart. We could not have asked for more. Though the labor was long and ended up in a c-section, both mama and baby came through safe and sound. The hospital experience was wonderful – nicer and smoother, dare I say, than any hospital experience I've

ever had in the U.S. Our friends and teammates and students here have showered us with love and gifts and encouragement. One of our students asked Erin a couple of days ago what it's like to have a baby who is immediately and deeply loved by so many people, all around the world. Erin didn't really know how to answer. Words like "amazing," "humbling," and "blessing" come to mind. We feel that gratitude should naturally be – and has been – our first and best response to Elsa Lynne's birth.

CHALLENGE. As many of you well know, having a baby – perhaps especially the first go-round – is not without its trials and challenges. I readily admit that ours have been relatively few, but we have experienced some, especially Erin. The most difficult parts for us have been: 1) Being far from many of our friends and family. I hate the fact that, for instance, my brother and my dad still don't know Elsa! There are moments when it's tough to be a foreign missionary. But it helps me to remember that about 50% of grandparents in the U.S. live more than 200 miles from their grandkids, and that God always fills in the gaps. We're doing His will and He's always faithful to honor that. We feel like Puebla is where we're called to be, and we trust God with the rest. 2) Lack of sleep, or at least lack of any kind of regular sleep schedule. Erin has suffered more than I have here. Breast-feeding is awesome in so many ways, but it has required Erin to be quite sleep-deprived for several weeks. Thankfully, we're getting back into a rhythm now, and very soon we'll be able to bottle-feed. But no doubt, it is difficult to adjust to not just being able to go to sleep at night and wake up in the morning. 3) Ability to focus. This goes hand-in-hand with the sleep thing. It has been quite difficult for me to get back into work and find my rhythm there. I love my job! And I love being with Elsa – and helping Erin. I feel constantly torn between two good and worthy causes. I feel incredibly unproductive at work. I'm behind in my online seminary class and stunk up my second quiz. But maybe it's good that I've had to rely even more on God to do the ministry, not me. Again, as far as pregnancies go, ours has been very low on the challenge scale. We are surrounded by love, healthy, and blessed.

MINISTRY. One of the things we're most excited about is how Elsa will enhance and participate in our ability to be witnesses of the love and grace and truth and provision of our great God. Don't get me wrong – I don't look at Elsa and first and foremost see "ministry tool." What I'm really talking about is how the addition of a child will provide Erin and me with more opportunities to model something that, sadly, so many of our students have little to no experience with: a loving, Christ-centered family. My mentor Dr. Donovan always reminds us that "the ministry of marriage" is our first priority. As married people, if our students don't see us loving and serving each other in Christ-like love and humility, all of the preaching and activities will fall on deaf ears. It's the same now

for us as parents. As we love and instruct and guide Elsa daily, we do so knowing that many young future leaders who are making faith decisions are closely observing us. It's a sobering challenge but also an incredible opportunity! We're excited.

I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity here to thank all of you for the prayers and gifts and words of encouragement. They mean the world to us – perhaps even more since we are so far away from the traditional networks of support. In summary, we're a little tired, quite excited, and incredibly grateful for the life of Elsa Lynne McDade. We recommend getting married and moving to a foreign country and having a baby there to everyone! Hey, don't knock it 'til you try it!

SUMMER IN MEXICO

By Karen Neal

SummerScope is an amazing week where we invite all our friends, supporters, and churches (really anyone) to join us for a week in Mexico where they can see and experience the culture, the ministry of El Pozo, grow together and closer to God, and serve Him through working hard for a week in the community and in the ministry. This past summer we had four different churches represented, but the majority of the group was from a youth group in Johnson City, TN (Grandview). Praise God for all that took place in Puebla, Mexico!

- Praise God for 30 people willing to give up a week of their summer to be used by God.
- Praise God that my mom and aunt joined us and cooked all the food to free up everyone else.
- Praise God that the rain never really slowed us down.
- Praise God for the kids at the orphanage that will just steal your heart with one smile.
- Praise God for Maria Elena (Mexican student) being baptized at the end of the week.
- Praise God for the friendships made.
- Praise God for the Spanglish that was spoken all week as Mexicans and Americans worked together.
- Praise God for wonderful teammates (even those in the States) who helped to make everything flow.
- Praise God for making us flexible and reliant on Him and not on ourselves.



- Praise God that no one was sick ... at all.
- Praise God for hard work.
- Praise God for His greatness, power, love, and might.
- Praise God for eyes that were opened and hearts that were changed.
- Praise God for the ministry of El Pozo and the lives He is changing in Mexico!

Of course we are already planning our next SummerScope that will take place June 20-26, 2010! We would LOVE to pack our facility out and have an overflow of people learning, growing, and giving together in Mexico. If you have ever wanted to experience a new culture, eat some incredibly yummy food (this is coming from the girl that didn't like Mexican food until she moved here), meet some amazing college students, and work a little, too, then this trip is for YOU. If you, your church, youth group, Sunday school class, or anyone you know would be interested in joining us next summer let me know (karencneal@gmail.com) and I'll pass along the information. Thanks to everyone for all your support and prayers. Come visit us in Puebla this summer!

PRAYER NEEDS

- **Health:** Many of our students and teammates have been sick over the past few weeks.
- **Staff transitions for the spring semester:** We are excited to have Kami Burns join our team in the spring. Erin will be figuring out what her time looks like at the ministry while taking care of Elsa.
- **Student leaders:** Pray for continued growth in relationships with God and in the ministry.
- **Family:** Clay and Amanda Cooper are expecting their third child on April 23.
- **Mission trip:** Every spring we go to Juarez to work with Casas por Cristo in building a house for those in need. Pray for students who are interested, pray for parents to allow their students to go, pray for the money to fund this trip, pray for God to be at work in every part of it.
- **Interns:** Pray that they will continue to be motivated, will meet lots of students, will be bold in their conversation, and will grow during their internships.

WISH LIST

- We have a great problem of exceeding our seating capacity for our devotional lunch. We are in need of more tables and chairs to seat everyone.
 - Sponsor a meal: \$120 for both our weekly Bible study meal and our devotional lunch.
 - Support the ministry of El Pozo.
- Give at cmfi.org/puebla



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