



## lesson 3

# The Mission in Mexico

MY NAME IS JUAN. In the United States, you would call me John. I live in the country of Mexico. On the map, my country lies to the south of the United States.

## The Land of Mexico

My land is very beautiful. We have land that is flat. That part of our country is called the Central Plateau. This plateau stretches north and connects to the border with the United States by the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. An isthmus is a narrow strip of land that connects two larger areas of land. On the western side of the isthmus is the Pacific Ocean; on the eastern side is the Gulf of Mexico. These two bodies of water are connected by the Rio Grande. Rio means *river*.

The Isthmus of Tehuantepec has rich soil for growing food for Mexico. It also has very large forests and fields of grass where we pasture the many cattle that we raise.

The eastern, western, and southern borders of Mexico are made up of mountains known as the Sierra Madre. There are three ranges or three parts to these mountains.

In the west, the mountains are called the Sierra Madre Occidental. The highest mountain is 11,500 feet.

In the east, the mountains are called Sierra Madre Oriental. These mountains go up to 12,100 feet. There are many rivers and minerals in these mountains.

In the south, the mountains are called Sierra Madre del Sur, and they go up to 12,600 feet. There is a range of mountains south of our capital, Mexico City, which has many volcanoes. They stretch from the Occidental mountains on the west to the Oriental mountains on the east. The highest volcano is 18,700 feet!

The Sierra Madre has many silver mines. Spanish people came to our land because of the wealth that could be found here, and much silver was taken from the mines belonging to the Mexican people. Today, Mexico leads the world in silver mining.

The most important city in Mexico is Mexico City. The city is surrounded by mountains. It is in the Valley of Mexico. There are many earthquakes in this area. There was a big earthquake in 1985 and many thousands of people were killed.

Mexico City is our country's capital. It is a very old city. It was started in the year 1325. Mexico City is one of the largest cities in the world.

Mexico City is an industrial city, which means many things are manufactured here. About one half of all the things made in Mexico come from Mexico City.

In the center of the city, is the Zócalo (Plaza of the Constitution). Going outward from this center, there are areas where very wealthy people live. But farther from the center of the city it is very crowded and the people are very poor.

In some parts of Mexico City, there are small neighborhoods where the people are Native Americans.

The most important port in Mexico is along the Mexico-Texas border at the city of Veracruz. Oil was discovered here.

Mexico has many interesting wild animals. In the highlands there are wolf, coyote, black bear, and beaver. In the lowlands there are jaguar, puma, and monkeys.

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## Challenges faced by missionaries in Mexico:

- Half of the Mexican population is under the age of 25.
- There are possibly as many as 600,000 street children.
- Many of the wealthy do not believe in God.
- Pastors and godly leaders are needed for poor areas.
- There is a need for trained leaders in Bible schools & seminaries.
- In Mexico City, about 1,000 neighborhoods are without an evangelical congregation.
- There are 18 million poor in Mexico, 7 million living in slums and squalid conditions. It is difficult to find missionaries willing to be committed to this work.

We have unusual animals such as the bandicoot and the tapir. The gila monster, as well as poisonous snakes and frogs, are some of our poisonous animals. The oceans on both sides of Mexico are full of sealife, such as sea lions, grey whale, sharks, and dolphins. There are also many different types of brightly colored birds.

The weather in my country can be very hot or very cold. In the highlands, it is cold and there is not much rain. In the southern lowlands, it is hot and wet.

## The People of Mexico

The language I speak is Spanish. My ancestors learned to speak Spanish when men from the country of Spain came to our land many years ago. They took our silver and brought us new customs and a new language.

There are many Spanish words that people in the United States use today such as patio, taco, tortilla, and veranda. Maize (corn), tomatoes, and tobacco came from Mexico. We grow sapodilla trees. It is the sappy juice of this tree that is used in making chewing gum.

Many of our strange names and words came from the Native Americans who lived here before the Spanish people came, such as Popocatepetl, the name of one of our volcanoes.

There are over 100,000,000 people in Mexico. Most of my people are *mestizos* which means they are part Native American and part Spanish. Some people are all Spanish. They are called *criollos*. Many people from different countries all over the world also live here.

My people like art and color. A famous painter from Mexico, named Diego Rivera, painted murals—one of our favorite types of art. Soccer is our favorite sport.

We have special days called fiestas or festivals. My favorite two are Children's Day on April 30, and Cinco de Mayo Day on May 5. We celebrate fiestas with music, dancing, and dressing in special clothes. We also eat lots of foods such as corn tortillas, beans, rice, and hot chilies!

## The Church in Mexico

The country of Mexico has many churches, but not many people go to church. My people do not know very much about the Bible and about God. Many people still worship the spirits and false gods that their ancestors worshiped hundreds of years ago.

Now we are beginning to learn about the real God and his son, Jesus. We have Bibles that we can read in our own language. There are so many different languages used by the people of Mexico, it will take a long time for every group to have its own Bible to read.

Before we can understand this new book, we need teachers who can explain the stories and all the things that God is saying to us. We need someone to show us how God wants us to live together in happy families. We need the help of missionaries!

People who go to other people and tell them about God are called missionaries. Some missionaries never leave their towns or cities. They tell their neighbors and friends about God and his son, Jesus. Other missionaries want to take the stories Jesus taught to people far from their homes, and that is why some of them come to Mexico.