

November 2010

“...don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin constructing of a building without first getting estimates and then checking to see if there is enough money to pay the bills? Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of funds. And then how everyone would laugh at you! They would say, 'there's the person who started that building and ran out of money before it was finished!'" - *Jesus, Luke 14:28-30*

It is now the end of 2010, and a good time to reflect over Jesus' words as recorded by Luke. Theresa and I returned to Mexico just about a year and a half ago with high hopes of quickly beginning, and just as rapidly completing the construction phase of a Bible School / Vocational School. At that time we had a model built, floor plans begun, a concept of exactly how we envisioned the construction would take place and how the finished product would look, some money in the bank with which we hoped to purchase land, and the desire to get on with the task.

One and a half years later, as we look back, we see that things did not follow the plans as we had laid them out. We now have to ask some questions of ourselves: "Has God's hand been in the changes, and does this mean that we need to rethink the original plans, or have we veered off of the path, and off of God's plan altogether?"

First of all, what has been accomplished over the past year and a half, and where is the work now? In answer, let me say that a property was not purchased for lack of pursuing the goal. We attempted to purchase land on three different occasions over this time, and each time our attempt was blocked for a variety of reasons. It was becoming pretty evident that God was telling us to wait, and that he would provide us with what he has for us.

...so while we waited on God, we continued to be active. Theresa and I continued to head up one of the little mission outreaches at a place called las Pitás. We began a film ministry outreach after we were generously given money by some friends to purchase equipment. We continued to be a part of the local church ministry. We were able to assist as Landmark Christian Fellowship brought two teams down to build an addition onto the local church building for Sunday school rooms. We continued to host Project L.A.M.B.S. teachers as they taught in the Bible School. We began an English language school. We linked in with other ministries in southern Mexico and were able to bring them to Cd. Valles in order to train in the local church. And we continued to become more and more a part of the local community and the local church body in Cd. Valles. No, we have not exactly been twiddling our thumbs over the interim. Still, the outcome does not reflect the nice pattered results which our North American minds like to see.

So what has been accomplished? I strongly believe that there has been a shifting and refocusing taking place over the months. I personally believe that if we had been able to advance directly

from the get-go as we had expected to proceed, that we may have missed God's best for the work. There seems to be a much more Mexicanization of the vision taking place. What I mean by this is that I believe that the finished results will look less American (or Canadian), and more national - more Mexican. I believe that this is right, and that it is God's plan for the work. Perhaps the Bible School facility itself will look less like a transplant of some North American institution, and more like something which has been birthed from within Mexico itself. Again, I believe that this is God's better plan for the School.

So, what exactly is going on now? We are in the final stages of completing the purchase of a 6 ½ hectare piece of land about 15 minutes south of Cd. Valles. Five of the hectares are already in sugarcane, and are already contracted to the local sugarcane mill. This contract makes the land very valuable as it is a guaranteed buyer of all of the cane produced on the land. The vision is simple – *simple*, but not necessarily *easy*. The property will become the hub of a Training Center where the students will be taught in the Word as well as in hands-on skills. Farming will be a major focus for the Center along with the construction of the needed buildings to both house the students and staff, as well as for classroom space. The Training Center will become self sustaining and self supporting within a very few years by producing sugarcane and other farm crops. Perhaps animals can also be raised.

All of a sudden the nagging question as to how the School was going to be able to support itself on the long term has been answered – it will do so by farming. Also, the dilemma as to how the students can be naturally trained in hands-on skills as they study the Word of God has an equally natural solution – they will do so by learning how to run the farm, how to build the buildings needed to live in, how to raise the animals needed to eat and sell, and a multitude of other skills needed within a community. In this way the training can be much more inclusive in nature. Rather than being classroom-focused only, it can become rounded to include a much bigger scope.

Once again, had we not banged our faces into closed doors over the past year and a half, I suspect that we would have a wonderfully American-looking school now sitting somewhere in Cd. Valles, and maybe, just maybe, we would have missed God's best.

We are also in the very final stages of finishing off a new non-profit for the Training Center. The new work will be called "*Obreros Unidos para Cosechar*" or "*Laborers United for the Harvest*"- an apt and fitting name for what we believe God is going to do through the School.

The property has cost more than we thought that it would, and more than we had budgeted for land purchase. The price that we got it for was really very good as land prices go around Cd. Valles - especially for productive agricultural land. We expect that the sugarcane production will be able to cover most of the on-going costs of running the School (after construction expenses) within a few years. But there are also some unexpected costs, and we will need God's provision and wisdom to proceed.

The old cane which is on the land presently is no good any longer, and must be cut, mulched and ploughed into the soil. The land will then have to be cultivated and made ready for replanting.

Cane seed-stock must be purchased, and as soon as the rains begin, the fields must be replanted. All of this, including the equipment to work the soil, the manual labour needed to plant, and the seed-stock, will cost about \$10,000 dollars. However, this is an investment which will yield for six to seven years before replanting will need to happen again.

We very much need a small tractor and implements to work the farm. At present we are completely reliant upon renting equipment to work the fields. This is very expensive. We pray that God lays it on someone's heart to donate a small, used tractor and field implements for the Bible School. In this way, the goal of self-financing can be realized much quicker.

So, to take Jesus at his word – do we have what is needed to finish the task? – Yes, I believe so. The focus has been honed and redirected in some ways, but it is sharper for the honing. Has the past year and a half been a waste of God's time? Indeed not! In fact, had it not taken place, the honing could not have happened. As the year draws to a close, I am encouraged to see what God has in mind for the next – for 2011.

I want to thank each of you who has so generously and sacrificially given over the past year so that Theresa and I can continue to serve in Mexico, and so that the work can continue here. None of this can happen without people such as you – people who are willing to give so that others can be blessed. The financial needs right now are even bigger than before. Within weeks we will need to be able to begin getting the land ready for planting, and the process of building the School can now soon begin. This is all very exciting, but it also requires funds to move forward.

Please continue to remember us in your prayers as well as in your financial giving. Mexico continues to be unstable, and in many ways very unsafe. Theresa and I continue to know that we are under God's protective hand of blessing. Still, it remains unnerving at times.

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May you have a wonderfully blessed Christmas season as you remember the birth of our Savior and Lord.

Your missionaries,

Steven and Theresa Frey