

The Little Big Man

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Here's the story of the Little Big Man, Manuel. This is a story of how we limit ourselves from being big in God's kingdom, of how a little man on the margin of a society in a country on the margin of the world knew how to be a big Godly man and do great things. May we all take some of the courage and fervor of this little man and be big.

Manuel was in his small home with his wife that was dying. She had a tumor in her stomach and he had paid the witch doctor to come and heal her, but the witch doctor had not been able to do it. While he was in town a few days later he heard about Jesus Christ. He didn't know what to believe at first, but he prayed a simple prayer. If Jesus was real and if Jesus would heal his wife, Manuel would serve him for the rest of his life. As he finished the prayer his wife's fever went away and she got out of bed. Manuel is a man of his word and decided to serve God, but he knew so little about Him...

One day Manuel went to his local gathering of believers in his little community in Mexico's most southern state, Chiapas, bordering Guatemala. There he saw an Agua Viva brochure. How it got to the boonies on the margin of the world, maybe we'll never know this side of heaven. But he saw that brochure and decided to act.

Manuel, of the Chol people group, one of the 285 indigenous groups of Mexico, decided that he should attend that school. So he went home and told his wife he would need to be gone for the next four months. How would she and the two small children survive in his absence? He sold his bicycle and his cow, his two greatest possessions, and gave his wife the money. But how to get so far north?

Manuel went out into the jungle and cut down a great Mahogany tree. With a chainsaw he cut that tree into 8 huge 4"x10"x12' planks. He walked 45 minutes through the Jungle with each plank to get them all out to the highway. From there he got a truck to carry them to the local lumber yard where he sold them. With that money he was able to buy a bus ticket to Mexico City, where he had a dream that a person would put the remaining necessary money in his shirt pocket. Upon arrival in Mexico City, he looked up a Christian pastor. He told the pastor what he was doing and the pastor put money in Manuel's shirt pocket. It was just enough money to get to Ensenada.



Manuel with his wife, Martha, and their two children.

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If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me as the scriptures said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.' John 7:38

The Little Big Man

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Shoot forward five days to Rancho Agua Viva. One day in August, about two weeks before MTI was to begin, a little indigenous man shows up. He doesn't seem quite right. He says he's come to study at MTI, but in barely recognizable Spanish. He seems drugged and ready to faint. We're not sure what to think about him and the truth is, we don't think much. But he asks Eric and Roxana Ericsson for work around their home, and as he begins to work the story begins to unfold. He doesn't really know Spanish, as it is his second language. He looks ready to faint because he is. He had enough money for the five day bus ride to Ensenada, but no money left over for food. This man has not eaten in five days! The passion by which this little man has come to study humbles us all.

He studies for a semester, soaking everything in **while** learning to do so in Spanish. Among other skills, he goes back home after graduation with a license to teach Alfalit, a method of teaching people to read by using the Bible. 85% of the people who learn to read by using the Bible accept Jesus as their Savior. But wait! The story isn't over!

Later we receive word that Manuel has called the Mexico City center for Alfalit. He says he has some students out in the jungle and he needs someone to come out and

advise him about helping them. They chuckle at the Mexico City Alfalit office. Some guy in the jungle (with choppy Spanish) has a few students and needs advice, but they send someone out anyway.

When they arrive, they find that Manuel's workload in the jungle is with eighty-five enthusiastic students! And he has over 150 others on a waiting list!!! What?!?!?

Precious Manuel returns for a second semester at MTI, and later attends the 20th MTI graduation celebration with his little wife. Martha is from the Tzetsal indigenous group, and these two people groups don't have much to do with one another. Another amazing fact from Manuel's life: he has a cross-cultural marriage of love and respect with a little God-loving Tzetsal woman.

One more time: why do we love the Ministries of Agua Viva? Because God uses the ministry to empower big men and women like Manuel and Martha to extend His kingdom. What a privilege. **You are a part of this.** Can we say it again? You keep Agua Viva moving forward. We are so grateful for your support, so that we can be here for the big big people the Lord is raising up in Mexico.

by Allyson Searway

Want to Help?

It has been said that missions happen "on the knees of those who pray, through the hands of those who give, and with the feet of those who go". Each part is just as important as the other. If one of these three aspects is missing, missions would be impossible. I believe that God has called each of us to participate in one, or more, of these aspects. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands us to "Go and make disciples of all nations". By praying, giving, or going, we can actively take part in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Our job won't be completed until the last village, the last tribe, the last person

hears of the love and sacrifice of Jesus. Thanks to those knees that pray, and those hands that give, we, at Agua Viva, can continue to be the feet that go to reach all parts of Mexico for Christ. I would like to challenge you now to answer the Lord's command to pray, give, or go to further the Kingdom of God. For how sweet will it be when we can look our Lord in the eyes and say "I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith!" (2 Timothy 4:7).

by Becky Heinrichs

We are very excited to report that 52 students are currently studying in our seminary, Ministry Training Institute (MTI). The 2007 seminary session began on August 26 and the graduation ceremony will be held on Saturday, December 1. (If you would like to attend the ceremony, please let us know. We would love to see you here!)

Each of these students need a scholarship to help pay for their three-month stay at MTI. The approximate cost per student is \$1500, which pays for food, lodging, supplies, books, and more.

These students are willing to face the risks Manuel faced, leaving behind their jobs and families and traveling across their country,

doing all of this with the sole purpose of learning God's word so that they can share it with those who have never heard.

If you would like to join Agua Viva Ministries in reaching Mexico for Christ by providing all or part of a scholarship for an MTI student, follow the simple directions below.

Please make checks out to Agua Viva Ministries and write **MTI Scholarships** on the memo line. Mail checks to:

Agua Viva Ministries
PO Box 1488
Lemon Grove, CA 91946

2007 Agua Viva Missions Trip Report

Between April 16 and May 11, several members of Agua Viva's staff took part in the annual missions trip to the South of Mexico. This year, the team entered uncharted territory (for an Agua Viva missions trip at least), crossing 22 of Mexico's 32 states. The team drove as far south as the Guatemalan border, where they were able to visit Manuel, of the previous article. In the following article, Valentin, Agua Viva's Missions Director, shares his reflections on the trip.



Manuel turned to me and said, "Thank you so much for coming." And he turned again to look at the people. There were at least 350 people gathered together in an open area of Frontera Corozal, an indigenous community nestled in the jungle between the borders of Mexico and Guatemala.

He looked in awe at the people of his community that had gathered to hear the message of salvation. Once again he turned to me and said, "Thank you for coming! There are so many people!"

Manuel was amazed by the response of the people. Many people gave their lives to the Lord after we showed a film and I had the opportunity to share a salvation message. You could see it in his eyes and hear it in his trembling voice; once again he said, "Thanks for coming!"

Manuel is an MTI student, a worker with a heart for reaching his community, and also a part of the trip that a team of staff from Agua Viva took. We traveled more than 7,000 miles through 22 states of the Mexican Republic.

Each community that we visited is special. The people are just as unique as their customs, their jobs, in some instances their language, and even their gods. What doesn't change is the immense need of the people of every tribe, town, or city in Mexico to clearly hear the message of Jesus Christ. It is a great and urgent need, and our hearts beat to see it completed!

This is why we continue to go and support our students serving on the mission field. We know the difficulties and the obstacles that they face daily in their respective communities.

This is why we continue to go and recruit other leaders who have never had the opportunity to learn and prepare themselves to serve the Lord in a more effective way. The majority of the workers in the fields of Mexico lack the most elementary preparation. A large percentage has not read the Bible completely, and many of them don't even know how to read.

We want to continue to go and bring them to do more than just fill them with information, but to form in their hearts the character of Christ, leaving them full of passion to reach their communities.

This is why MTI exists. This is the reason we are here. We want all of Mexico to lay their lives before our Lord. It is our dream, our desire.

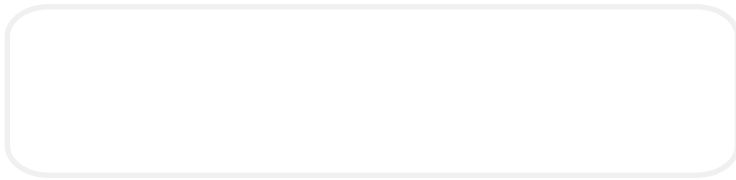
This is the reason, in writing all of this, I think of all of those who come from other countries to visit us. I think of all of you, the groups and churches that come to Agua Viva, who are such an important part of our work in Mexico. People just like us, who in going to other communities, find themselves challenged to abandon their homes, invest their resources, and overcome cultural and linguistic valleys, with the goal of letting others know the love of our Lord.

It is an adventure that our Lord has called us to live out together! Working united in the spreading of His Gospel.

Today I want to turn and look you in the eyes, just like Manuel did to me and say, "Thank you for coming!" Don't stop doing it. We need you. Mexico needs you. Together we can reach Mexico for His Glory!

by Valentin Favela





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Get to Know . . . Alex and Sonia Gastelum



Alex and Sonia with Keyla and Edgar.

We are the Gastelum family: Alex, Sonia, and our children, Edgar and Keyla. We have been very happy to be serving God through Agua Viva Ministries for almost four years now. It has been a very special time of learning and adapting, but above all, a time filled with blessings.

Sonia says:

I have been serving in the area of finances and accounting at Agua Viva. God has given me the privilege of serving in my church as coordinator and teacher for the children and also helping my husband in praise and worship.

Edgar says:

I am 10 years old. I like to get to know people and make friends. I want to go on another mission trip. I love soccer and candy.

Keyla says:

I am 8 years old. I like to travel, sing, and play with my friends. I also want to go on another mission trip together with my family.

Our dreams are to serve the Lord as a family more and more, to travel, and to finish the construction of our house.

Alex says:

I studied in MTI for three years and am now serving in the area of maintenance and construction. Apart from that, God has given me the opportunity to go on two mission trips with Agua Viva, the second one together with my family. I have the privilege of being one of the leaders in my congregation, as well as the director of praise and worship.

Editor's Notes

- ✓ Wow, we've had some amazing months here at Agua Viva, jam-packed full of American groups coming on mission trips, Mexican camping groups, youth camp, our annual mission trip, our staff retreat and so much more!!!
- ✓ In July Jeff and Ineke Glavor joined our full-time staff. We are excited to work with them to reach Mexico for Christ!
- ✓ We are beginning our Fall seminary session. We are honored to teach some amazing men and women of God. The graduation ceremony will be held at Rancho Agua Viva on December 1. We would love to see you here! Please let us know if you would like to attend.

Thank you for all of your prayers and support! We couldn't do any of this without all of you! Please continue to pray for Agua Viva, pray for Mexico, pray for the work God is doing!

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