

*Then it came about as they were going along & talking, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire & horses of fire which separated the two of them, & Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.
2 Kings 2:11*



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CELEBRANDO NAVIDAD
GROUP INFORMATION

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JUST SOME NOTES!

We are so excited that you are wanting to come visit us and spend time ministering in areas surrounding Rio Bravo, Mexico. The areas that we work in are very poor BUT very loving and eagerly awaiting to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ.

If you're flying - McAllen is just 20 minutes away and Harlingen is 35. Either one will be fine. Keep in mind when you fly out we'll need to be there a minimum of 90 minutes before takeoff. Be sure and check your backpack for its contents...leave the BRASS KNUCKLES at home. For those not understanding this comment - be sure and ask me when you get here. Boy do I have a story to tell you!

Questions always arise about the safety of working in Mexico (mostly from parents). In our 13years of mission work we have never been fearful of the neighborhoods or people. When with a team we always come back to the stateside before dark.

THIS CAN CAUSE PROBLEMS

PLEASE do not make promises to the nationals that you cannot keep. You may have the best intentions in the world but they could still fall through. When you tell them 'maybe we can build you a church' or 'we'll send some money' or 'we'll send money for presents for the kids'...you are setting them up for a broken heart when it doesn't go through. It would be better for them to be surprised than to build their hopes up.

Offer to pray for their needs but make no promises. Refer to above paragraph. Why do I go into such detail.....we've seen it over & over & really want to make sure the Lord leads rather than our emotional being.

JUST A NOTE: Perhaps you would be willing to use your van/bus to go back & forth across the border. We would be willing to pay the insurance for crossing the border these three days.

PASSPORT UPDATE

Note: Beginning June 1, 2009, U.S. and Canadian citizen children UNDER AGE 16 arriving by land or sea from contiguous territory may also present an original or copy of his or her birth certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, a Naturalization Certificate, or a Canadian Citizenship Card.

Beginning June 1, 2009, U.S. and Canadian citizen children UNDER AGE 19 arriving by land or sea from contiguous territory and traveling with a school group, religious group, social or cultural organization, or sports team, may also present an original or copy of his or her birth certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, a Naturalization Certificate, or a Canadian Citizenship Card.

The group should be prepared to present a letter on organizational letterhead with

the following information:

- The name of the group and supervising adult;
- A list of the children on the trip, and the primary address, phone number, date of birth, place of birth, and name of at least one parent or legal guardian for each child; and
- A written and signed statement of the supervising adult certifying that he or she has obtained parental or legal guardian consent for each participating child.

DAILY SCHEDULE

SCHEDULE -The 27th will start with breakfast at 8 a.m. with the rest of the day spent organizing supplies, baking cupcakes, making and counting KID BAGS, putting together raffle bags, evangelism and face painting, loading the trailers & vehicles, possibly a construction project (if funding is provided). On the 28th breakfast is at 7:30 a.m., then we will be setting up the field, witnessing door to door AND project work. We want to be able to give of ourselves physically, spiritually and prayerfully! The 29th is FIESTA TIME with breakfast at 6:30 a.m.! Off to Mexico we go!

BREAKDOWN OF FIESTA - Our WHOLE purpose for CELEBRANDO is to SHARE JESUS WITH THE LOST. All day there will be preaching, testimony, music and a GODLY RAFFLE (bait to get folks to come). In the other areas of the field there will be various games, popcorn, face/fingernail painting, bean & hot dog cooking. Some of our Dump Church sisters have agreed to come over from Reynosa to head up the bean cooking. 2016 may possibly see us splitting teams up to do services in several areas, on the 28th and 29th!

GODLY RAFFLE - Because you just never know from one day to the next how the border authorities will respond to our donations - this year we're suggesting that those involved in raffle donations consider sending the dollars instead. On the 1st day of the event, we will send a group of wiley shoppers across the border to make raffle purchases, which will be stored in a participating church. Of course NEW raffle donations are still welcome, just looking to minimize what crosses over. Please refer to handout for ideas of items that would work wonderful as raffle items. Try to think of practical, useful items. We're always looking for a BIG TICKET item that will also help bring folks in to stay for the day. 2014 saw a house construction filling that spot!

KID BAGS - Lots and lots and lots of KID BAGS are needed. IF AT ALL POSSIBLE - bring them already 2/3's filled with pink or blue yarn attached. Check out the revised KID BAG flyer. We've ran out in 2012 and 2016! Ask other churches or groups to get involved in this project.

GAMES - Please take a look at the games we've thought of and if you have any more ideas please let us know. If you see anything on the list that you actually have the items that you're willing to share - BRING THEM (just let us know). Several of the games need replacing - they're in bad shape - ya wanna help?

NO REGRETS... Nathan always encourages EVERYONE to go home with NO REGRETS! Don't head out & think...Gee, I wished I would have.... Shared my testimony, presented the gospel, etc. If you

have never given your testimony, go over the next couple of pages for an example of how to do it. Keep in mind - what you would say in the U.S. wouldn't necessarily work in Mexico...Church camp? Walk the aisle? Where you live in the U.S.? Most of that would have zero meaning to someone who lives in a dump type situation!

HOUSING... groups will be staying either in the Macedonian Christian Academy which have bathroom/shower facilities and kitchen or the FLAME dorms that are within 10 minutes driving distance. Those in the school either bring air mattress or sleeping bags. Wherever you stay - it's just like church camp - bring your bedding and towels and nice smelly stuff! Depending on our numbers - I may have to do a first come first serve on who gets to stay in the school - which seems to be a popular place. Splitting up a team may be a possibility but I'll talk to you before any decisions are made.

NO PURPLE... Boys are blue, girls are red, together that makes PURPLE. Dating a team member can be a major distraction to the commitment you have made to serve on this mission trip. Keep your focus on spending all of your energy sharing Jesus. Team Leaders - (unless married), please encourage a 'hands off' commitment from the young adults, especially.

Personal Necessities to Bring

- *Photo ID for Border and copy or original Birth Certificate (for 19 and under) OR passport
- *Bible
- *Toiletries
- *Pillow
- *Sleeping Bag or Sheets and Blanket (dorm) OR AIR MATTRESS for the school
- *Towels and Wash Clothes
- *Flashlight
- *Gum/Candy (to give away) (throw some chocolate in for me!)
- *Personal Medicine
- *Camera
- *Money - for Cokes in Mexico or shopping in Progreso
- *Baby Wipes/Hand Sanitizer - to clean up with in Mexico
- *Alarm Clock
- *Flash Drive - for downloading everyone's pictures

Dress Code for All Campers

- *Tennis Shoes (Bring comfortable shoes you don't mind getting dirty or muddy - you might bring 2 pairs. We highly recommend tennis or closed toe shoes for Mexico). 2013 & 2014 required **mud boots!**
- *Flip Flops - for shower
- *Girls - Jeans, Capri's, Skirts, T/Sweat Shirt (it can get COLD!). NO shorts please.
- *Guys - Jeans, T/Sweat Shirt. Also NO shorts please.

NO spaghetti straps, no low cut tops, muscle tank tops, short shorts or shirts that expose the belly button.

Come dressed to represent Christ. Please advise your kids to dress conservatively and if you see someone who needs to change - ask them to do so!

WE UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR YOUR LAPTOP, CELL, IPAD, ETC.

JUST PLEASE SAVE THEM FOR BEFORE OR AFTER THE WORK AND WORSHIP IS FINISHED.

**THIS WEEK IS FOR FOCUSING ON THE LORD
AND NOT ON OURSELVES!**

HOW TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS THROUGH YOUR TESTIMONY

by Rick Warren

God has put a life message within you. When you became a believer you also became God's messenger. God wants to speak to the world through you. Paul said, "... we speak the truth before God, as messengers of God." You may feel you don't have anything to share, but that's the Devil trying to keep you silent. You have a storehouse of experiences that God wants to use to bring others into his family. The Bible says, "Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony of God in them." (1 John 5:10a GW)

Your testimony is the story of how Christ has made a difference in your life. Peter tells us that we were chosen by God "to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you." (1 Peter 2:9 MSG) This is the essence of witnessing - simply reporting your personal experiences with the Lord. In a courtroom, a witness isn't expected to argue the case, prove the truth, or press for a verdict; that is the job of attorneys. Witnesses just tell what happened to them. Jesus said, "You will be my witnesses." (Acts 1:8 NIV) He did not say, "You must be my attorney." He wants you to tell your story to others. Sharing your testimony is an essential part of your mission on Earth.

First, it is unique. There's no other story just like yours, so only you can share it, and if you don't, it will be lost forever. You may not be a Bible scholar, but you are the authority on your life, and it's hard to argue with personal experience. Actually, your personal testimony is more effective than a sermon because unbelievers see pastors as paid salesmen but see you as a satisfied customer, so they give you more credibility. Personal stories are also easier to relate to than principles, and people love to hear them; they capture our attention, and we remember them longer. Unbelievers would probably lose interest if you started quoting theologians, but they have a natural curiosity about experiences they've never had. Shared stories build a relational bridge that Jesus can walk across from your heart to theirs.

Another value of your testimony is that it bypasses intellectual defenses. Many people who won't accept the authority of the Bible will listen to a humble, personal story. That's why on six different occasions Paul used his testimony to share the Gospel instead of quoting Scripture. (Acts 22 to Acts 26) The Bible says, "Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15-16 TEV)

The best way to "be ready" is to write out your testimony and then memorize the main points.

Divide it into four parts:

- What my life was like before I met Jesus?
- How did I realize I needed Jesus?
- How did I commit my life to Jesus?
- What difference has Jesus made in my life?

Of course, you have many other testimonies besides your salvation story. You have a story for every experience where God has helped you. You should make list of all the problems, circumstances, and crises that God has brought you through. Then be sensitive and use the story that your unbelieving friend will best relate to.

Questions To Consider (Ideas for sharing a brief testimony)

1. **The Story Of Your Life**—Tell us a little bit about yourself (birthplace, parents/siblings, interests, etc.).
2. **2.The Story Of Your Faith**—What was your life like before knowing God personally? How did you come to know Jesus in your life? How are things different today?
3. **Coming To Grace**--When you moved into this area, how you ended up at this new church, what you like best, why you stayed, got involved, etc
4. **Stories Of Grace**—What has God been teaching you through his Word? How has He been providing for you, your family, etc? What have you learned about serving God, living out your faith in daily life, or loving others? How do you hope to continuing growing in faith and serving God in the future? What plans or desires do you have?

NOTE: Remember to keep in mind when you're on a foreign mission trip what I said about them not understanding some of our U.S. experiences. **5 minutes tops...that means 5 minutes ALSO for translation = 10 minutes total!**

If you have any ideas different than below...let us know. If you can put it together - that would be great!