

Home Churches Offer Safe Haven for Christians in Violence-Stricken Mexico

Most headlines involving Mexico over the past few years have revolved around some sort of drug cartel shootings, kidnappings or most recently, arson. Although the whole nation of Mexico is certainly not smothered in violence, many people in border towns are scared for their lives.

Of the 40,000 deaths that have occurred since 2006 connected to Mexican drug cartels, most have been men actually caught up in some way with the cartels. But the violence has spread easily and quickly outside those circles to include many civilians, paralyzing many who live along the border with fear.

“People have a feeling that today could be the day that they die,” says Todd Szalkowski with E3 Partners. “They literally approach every day, because of the violence there, as if it could be their last day on earth.”

Szalkowski says in every Mexico-U.S. border town, people have been directly affected by the violence through the death of innocent friends or family, the death of loved ones who were wrapped up in the cartels, or the abductions of those around them. Szalkowski says kidnappings for ransom are common among middle-class Mexicans.

As a result, “People are afraid to gather in large groups, and that affects church-going people. They’re seeing their pastors abducted out of the pulpit right in front of their eyes and held for ransom.”

Szalkowski says it’s gotten to the point where families are sending children away. “Our pastor friends in these border

towns are asking us to adopt their daughters and bring them to the United States because of their fear for their safety.”

Gripped by fear, even believers are too nervous to attend church. They’re staying in, and in extreme cases, some are turning to answers from ungodly sources.

“People feel the cartels are somehow protected [through] all kinds of idol worship,” explains Szalkowski. “So civilians are looking at that and saying, ‘Well, if it’s protecting the cartels, maybe that’s the direction I should go,’ rather than worshipping the Creator God of the universe.”

E3 Partners has been in Mexico for 20 years. The ministry currently has a presence in most key cities along the north and south borders. After watching the ways spiritual growth has been halted by fear, E3 is planning a new plan of attack.

E3 is implementing their I Am Second program into home groups in Mexico, to encourage group Bible studies that will essentially serve as small house churches. The hope is that as people get involved with the home churches, the groups will multiply. So far, E3 has just completed a few training sessions, but their goal is to have 8,000 of these groups along the border.

In order to do this, E3 has a couple of needs. First, these church groups, which will serve as beacons of Christ’s hope and light to a volatile area, need Bibles. E3 is providing the groups with hardcover Bibles that will last.

The ministry also needs prayer that many might come to the Lord. “[We’re] praying that we can reach as many people with the gospel of Jesus Christ before violence or other negative things impact their lives in such a way that we’ve lost them,” Szalkowski concludes.