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But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. Ex. 1:12

These have been two months of crazy physical and emotional affliction for my family. My mom was hospitalized with a heart attack the first week of May. The following week, my dad had surgery to insert a g-tube to alleviate his chronic swallowing difficulties. A week later, my grandson, David, now 4 years old, was diagnosed with relapsed leukemia, this time in the central nervous system, after completing 3 ½ long years of chemo and having been declared cancer-free just weeks prior. I had oral surgery including a bone graft in Guadalajara last week. This stuff is not easy, nevertheless, we know well that it, too, is a good gift from our Father, and He has a perfect and sovereign purpose in it.

My last lesson before summer recess for the IBBM-Tepic Women of Excellence was about God's provision of a liberator/redeemer for Israel in the very most intense times of affliction. The children of promise found that in spite of conditions much worse than we can imagine, in a world full of the vilest of infidels making multiple unacceptable, unbearable and ungodly demands upon them, God was faithful; and surprisingly, at that moment at least, they were faithful to Him. He provided through His providence exactly what He had promised. I love Exodus 1:7. They "were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was *filled* with them." We learned that the word Moses (actually, God) uses for "*filled*" specifically denotes "*swarmed*" with them!

This recent personal affliction of ours doesn't really hold a candle to the suffering that the Hebrews endured at the culmination of their 400 years of bondage in the hands of Egyptian despots. But it does put into perspective the immense joy that comes with witnessing fruitfulness, great increase, multiplication, excessive strength, and the filling of the land with faithful followers that God delivers in the face of simultaneous suffering. And the following are a few examples of the *swarms* of *fruitful increase* in and around Tepic these past two months!

IBBM-Tepic celebrated its mothers the first week of May. The church platform was *swarming* with its beautiful ladies who are striving to follow God's direction for loving Him and their families well.



The IBBM-Tepic OANSA club has been *fruitful and increased greatly*; it too was *swarming* with OANSA kids and leaders receiving their awards for a year of fulfilling requirements for unashamed, approved workers. María and Lynethe began coming to OANSA when they were 4 and 6 years old (along with their parents). They have passed through the ranks of Cubbies, Sparkies, Flames, Torches, and Leaders-in-Training and are now sporting their official OANSA leaders' uniforms. The following week, the church was *filled* to the brim with happy clubbers as they spent their hard-earned OANSA-pesos at the annual OANSA fair organized and operated by their generous, hard-working leaders.

Juan José and David also are growing *exceeding strong* as they have placed their trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation and have obeyed His mandate to follow Him and be baptized.

There has been fruitful increase in the Huichol village churches, as well.

In 2003, Pastor José led a little group of Huichol missionaries on a long trek through the mountains to the very remote village of Mojarras. A few who heard the Gospel



believed. Since then, Pastor Hilario from Los Aires has stepped up to the challenge of continuing steadily to disciple and evangelize, and the little body of believers there has *multiplied and grown exceeding strong*. They have worked together under the leadership of their very own Pastor Felix, along with Pastor Hilario, to build a little church building from handmade adobes. In the previous prayer update, I shared some of the affliction they suffered in getting the roofing material to the village that is totally inaccessible by vehicle. The job has been done, and our faithful brothers and sisters there are filled with gratitude to their beloved Redeemer.



In the village of Zoquipan, yet another shaman has made the decision to trust Jesus as his Savior. For lots of years Asunción was a passionate persecutor of the believers at Zoquipan and the neighboring village of La Quemada. After he inherited the religious relics and position of shaman from his father, he grew even more antagonistic. Recently lots of personal afflictions stirred Asunción to begin to question his life-long trust in his false gods. While Pastor Manuel from Zapote and José Luis from La Bendición were visiting, teaching the book of Acts segment (*When the Church was Young and Bold -- Ha! How ironic, right?*) to the TEE (Theological Education by Extension) students at La Quemada, Asuncion put aside his pride and hiked to the neighboring village to hear the truth. He asked Manuel and José how much it would cost for him to become a believer. Manuel wisely answered, "Everything you have." The shaman made the wise choice to place his trust in the One, True Savior. A day later, he burned all of his powerless charms and religious trappings making a public statement that he, Asunción the shaman, was now a follower of Jesus. And *the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew*.



None of this *multiplication and growth and fruit* just happens. Many of you who are reading this have had a vital part, for a lot of years, in answering the call to participate in the logistics of the increase that God only gives in Tepic. For that I sincerely thank you; it has not been in vain. My sending church, NVBC (North Village Baptist), has stood valiantly alongside this Tepic team for more than 40 years. This past month, they sent another crew to help out. It was a daunting and humanly impossible task for the little band of hard-working servants, but as a result of literal blood, sweat and tears and national collaboration, the village church at La Bendición now has a fabulous OANSA game court! Our prayer is that the outcome of some momentary

affliction will be a generation of Huichol children who will know that we love them, that God loves them more, and will believe and offer their lives to *multiply and spread abroad* the Good News of the Liberator/Redeemer.

All because of Jesus and in His love,

Debbie

View assorted digital pictures of activities from the last two months here:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/debbiemellberg/collections/72157669756954042/>