

What can my church do? (cont'd)

Communications

- Develop a newsletter to communicate the needs of the Mexicans in North America.
- Initiate specific ministries to encourage isolated Mexican members to become believers using CDs, MP3 players (iPods), and radio for spiritual growth.

Mobilization

- Coordinate visits of former missionaries to the peoples of Mexico to assist with the work.
- Encourage churches currently supporting itinerant evangelists to direct some of their effort toward Mexicans.

What are their needs?

Even though most Mexican people claim to be of Christian persuasion, there remains a deep spiritual need to receive Christ as their *only* Lord and Savior. Because the belief system of the majority is a mixture of Christian beliefs and “spiritual practices” which are foreign to Christian beliefs, they claim to believe in Christ, yet they pray to the saints, virgins, and to souls of the dead asking for their physical protection, healing, and for miracles. Essentially, they are saying that Christ’s role as the Advocate to the Father is insufficient.

Learning English and assimilating into the American way of life is the second most important need they have. Doing so would greatly improve their chance of employment as well as to further their success once employed.



www.peoplegroups.info

If you cannot locate this people group in your community, find them online at

www.peoplegroups.info, a site sponsored by the North American Mission Board, SBC.

What is keeping the gospel from them?

Their syncretism belief systems are keeping the gospel from them. Another influence is the strong family ties and traditions that tend to serve as obstacles to those seeking Christ and bucking the long-held and deeply rooted beliefs. We know that the Mexican people have strong family responsibilities, as such, when one of them decides to follow Christ, he or she will often be rejected by families and friends. Following Christ would cause an emotional crisis in their lives that rarely can be overcome, and so, some if not most, would prefer not to receive Christ for fear of excommunication from their family and the Church. Secondly, the truth of the gospel is undoubtedly hidden from them by their religious beliefs which lead to unsavory spiritual practices and idolatry.

Information may be updated by writing peoplegroups@namb.net.

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Mexicans of North America

Who are the Mexicans?

Mexicans have been immigrating to North America for decades. There are multiple generations of families living in the United States. They dominate the millions of Spanish-heritage peoples in North America to the point that immigrants from other Hispanic nations are often mistaken for Mexicans. Typically, English and Spanish are spoken by this group of people; whereas the first generation immigrant usually only speaks Spanish. One out of 10 of all the people in Mexico do not speak Spanish, so not all immigrants may automatically speak Spanish. Generally, the second generation immigrant (or the children of the first immigrants) to some extent is bilingual, but prefer to speak English as their first language. This is attributed part and partial to the integration into the educational system where English is prevalent. The third generation (the grandchildren of the first immigrants) and beyond typically only speak English as they are further distanced from the Mexican heritage; however, there are some exceptions. Among this group, we find highly educated people such as movie stars, journalists, doctors, mechanics, businessmen, chefs, construction workers, restaurant workers, hotel workers, senators, and even astronauts.



Population in North America:
10 million
(63,000 in Canada)

Languages spoken by Mexicans:
Spanish and English

Top 5 locations with highest population of Mexicans in North America:

California	10,945,390
Texas	7,310,195
Arizona	1,681,834
Illinois	1,505,101
Florida	575,745

What is their heritage?

The Mexican people are amazing. Theirs is truly a multicultural society. They embrace their heritage and make every effort as a group under the American or Canadian flags to work jointly as a family in order to achieve success in this country. And that is why the Mexicans we meet, without a doubt, are hard working individuals with strong family ties. The Mexican people are extremely family-oriented and their children are respectful; reverently honoring the elderly and disabled.

Mother's Day is very important for them. On this day, if possible, all the family gathers for a special dinner in honor of their mother. El Cinco de Mayo, a Mexican holiday on the 5th of May, celebrates the victory of the Mexican Army over the French army; a celebration that is of great importance to the Mexican community. Mexican people are friendly and open to conversation even with strangers.

"Mexicans are overwhelmingly religious, therefore, symbolism and meaning have an important place in their daily lives."

What are their beliefs?



Among Mexican people living in North America we find a small percentage of evangelical believers, but the overwhelming majority profess to be Roman Catholic. Roman Catholic Mexicans typically honor the Virgin of Guadalupe to the extent that they call her "The Mother of All Mexicans." Every 12th of December, a special mass is held in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe. During

this traditional celebration, it is customary to honor the Virgin by offering her Mariachi music. The majority of the Mexican people hold this day as the most important day of their religious lives only surpassed by Easter, Resurrection Day. Mexicans are overwhelmingly religious, therefore, symbolism and meaning have an important place in their daily lives. This is evident through the Catholic iconography and the ever-pervasive presence of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe in almost every home. It's important to know the importance of Catholicism for many Mexicans and to respect their customs as a part of their culture and heritage.

What can my church do?

Endvisioning — beginning with the end in mind

- Identify the layers within Mexicans to understand the generation gaps between first and third generations.
- Identify existing resources useful in working among Mexicans to include them in a strategy for using or developing those still needed.
- Spend time walking among Mexicans looking specifically for things you find there that can be celebrated and actually facilitate a bridge to church planting.

Prayer — focusing on the people as well as calling out workers to the harvest

- Pray that the Holy Spirit may induce within our Mexican friends a sincere desire to hear the gospel of Christ, and to illuminate their understanding of who Christ is. In this way, they, too, can see that they are lost and may decide to receive Christ as their only Lord and Savior.
- Conduct an annual day of prayer and fasting for the Mexicans of North America.
- Begin a prayerwalk among the largest pockets or concentrations of Mexicans in your community.
- Enlist church members to develop a prayer strategy for working among Mexicans.

Networking for Evangelism — identifying relationships

- Provide English as Second Language classes to show the love of Christ for them and to alleviate the need. Educate church members about the Mexican culture and their beliefs, and to show respect and tolerance to their way of life. Remember that the Mexican people are very religious and are usually open to hear the gospel if one displays a sincere interest for them and their families.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to work. Recognize that He alone is able to bring them to fundamental understanding and, ultimately, to see the spiritual need they have of receiving Christ in their lives.
- Christian love is unknown to Mexicans, so intentional acts of kindness are appreciated, especially in times of need, loneliness, and transition.
- Assist those who are working with the Hispanic immigrant families, starting with food pantries and ministries such as The Migrant Farm Labor Center.

Starting Small Groups — that can become churches

- Ask persons of peace from among the Mexicans if they would like to conduct a short series of meetings to discuss spiritual things.
- Be intentional about making disciples who know how to witness and start new small groups.

Leadership Training — identifying and equipping

- Invite new church leaders, especially pastors, to parachurch-sponsored training events.
- Train church members to identify and equip new leaders to lead their own church's ministries.
- Mentor Mexican church leaders so they can help their members defend their faith.

Scripture and Communications

- Distribute Bibles in Spanish in print and audio formats.
- Learn to use a Spanish worldview oral Bible among those with an oral learning preference.
- Work closely with radio programmers to develop appropriate material for the Mexicans in North America, especially contextualized chronological Bible story sessions. Try to avoid duplicating efforts for resources that already exist.