



## *About the Author*

Martha Lucas Johnson grew up under the ministry of Bro. Gaylon Henry in the South Park Baptist Church of Ft. Worth, Texas. Her parents, J. L. and Ruby Lucas, are charter members of that church and J. L. serves as a deacon. It was in this setting that Martha gained valuable experience which has helped her in her desire to help young girls to grow in their service to Christ.



Martha attended Jacksonville College where she met her husband, Buddy Johnson. They have served in the pastorate in Texas and as missionaries in Mexico. Their eleven years in Mexico have helped Martha develop a desire to share the stories of some of the men with whom they live and work.

This book is one of the many stories which is intended to help American Christians understand the faith of Mexican Christians and to support them in prayer.

The Johnsons are the parents of five sons: Grady, Scott, Eric, Jonathan and Benjamin.



# PABLO





**Writer Martha Johnson and Pablo Chavez.**

—Mexican Trails Along the Way—  
Series

# Pablo

Martha <sup>Lucas</sup> Johnson, 1975  
(Illustrated by Shirley Hoffpauir)

36712

Baptist Progress  
Dallas, Texas

Scripture quotations are based on the King James Version of the Bible.

Copyright 1984  
Women's Missionary Auxiliary of Texas  
Published by Baptist Progress, Dallas, Texas

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

BMA  
277.2  
J68p

## Acknowledgment

I want to thank the Baptist Missionary Association of America for making it possible for our family to live and work with the Aztec people.

The Women's Missionary Auxiliary of Texas along with the *Baptist Progress* has made possible the printing of the first story of the Aztec Christians and their Mexican Trails Along the Way.

Martha Johnson

## Contents

Preface .....	8
Introduction .....	9
1. Night Meeting .....	11
2. Early Life .....	19
3. Following Old Paths .....	25
4. The Search .....	35
5. From the Shadows .....	43
6. New Faith .....	47
7. The New Religion .....	53
8. New Dangers .....	59
9. New Responsibilities .....	65
10. New Joys .....	69

## Contents

Preface .....	8
Introduction .....	9
1. Night Meeting .....	11
2. Early Life .....	19
3. Following Old Paths .....	25
4. The Search .....	35
5. From the Shadows .....	43
6. New Faith .....	47
7. The New Religion .....	53
8. New Dangers .....	59
9. New Responsibilities .....	65
10. New Joys .....	69

## Preface

Do you know a person who believes God for every need and circumstance? Pablo Chavez is just such a man. Pablo's faith is exciting and inspiring to the reader but to him it is a way of life. When Pablo became a believer, he accepted God's provisions as sufficient. He immediately felt the responsibility to carry the good news of God's life-changing love to the people of his village and his country. Danger and difficulty do not stop him.

The author, Mrs. Martha Johnson, has learned of God's sufficiency through her experience as a missionary wife. She and her husband have been closely associated with Pablo and his family. She wants to acquaint the reader with the power and person of God as He works in and through an humble Aztec man. The victories Pablo and the Johnsons experience can be yours! The formula is not easy but it is simple: believe and trust in God. All things are possible; only believe.

Follow the Mexican trails with Pablo as he follows the leadership of God.

Mrs. Bob (Bettye) White,  
Mt. Pleasant, Texas

## Introduction

Pablo Chavez's people, the proud and the mighty Aztec, have lived for centuries in the Huasteca. Huasteca means foothills. The Huasteca has three areas named for the three states in Mexico: Veracruz, San Luis Potosi, and Hidalgo. Pablo lives in the Huasteca Hidalguense.

The Aztec people here live very much as their ancestors have for centuries. They still live in mud huts with grass roofs. The men still farm little plots of land on the sides of the mountains. The women still grind corn between two rocks and cook on open fires.

They are no longer the proud and mighty Aztecs. Today it is easier to deny their heritage than to face the prejudice of the people. Hundreds of years ago when the Spanish conquerors took this land and its people, they gave them a new religion. In exchange, they took their pride and left only a yearning for a better life mixed with a fear of change.

Pablo has found that better life. He has changed. Today he holds his head high and is proud to be a child of God.



## 1 Night Meeting

In a clearing the night is bright, but in the trails of the Mexican Huasteca the light is broken by the trees and brush, leaving only patches illuminated—patches held by long, fingery shadows of leaves. It is dark. Pablo does not need light to walk these trails. He

walked them to play and go to school as a child. He has walked them to work for many years. He has even walked them in a drunken stupor, but not tonight.

Tonight his body seems to float along in step to the hymn he softly hums. His heart is happy. Nothing brings him more joy than entering a new village with the Word of God. He thinks of it like opening new ground to plant seed, and tonight he opened new ground. He planted the precious seed. He carried the Gospel to people who had never before heard the good news, and they listened. They accepted the Word. He will return to watch them grow in the Spirit. Fifteen people heard about his Savior.

Now, Pablo Chavez returns to Teresa and the children. Many times he has made the trip only to sleep off the effects of the quart of cane liquor he had drunk in the field after work. Then, Teresa and the children would have felt fear, and he, Pablo, would have been afraid of the night. Now the fear has been replaced by love.

Pablo has heard the rumors of trouble; armed men are guarding the trails to make certain nobody enters the village unseen.

But Pablo feels no fear. He feels only the joy of serving Jesus tonight. Then he hears the movement. Maybe it was only the wind. It doesn't matter. Rounding the next curve he is surrounded by 15 to 20 armed men. They are his neighbors. Within seconds his hands are tied behind him. He is searched.

"Why are you doing this to me? I am of the pueblo," Pablo tells these men.

Chinto who holds the rifle to Pablo's stomach replies, "You've changed, Pablo. You're no longer one of us."

Pablo answers, "I still work in the field with you. By birth I am one of the pueblo. Nothing can change that."

"You have new friends now and one is the Gringo. You don't drink with us. You stay at home or visit the new friends. You are learning new ways. The ways of our ancestors are not good enough for you. You have changed," accuses Chinto, "and you are teaching others the new ways. Maybe we will just kill you and end your new ways."

Pablo only says, "Yes, I've learned a new way."

All the men begin to shout, "We don't want you if you are not one of us. Better that you die than you divide the pueblo."

Calmly Pablo replies, "If that is what you want, I have a better pueblo waiting for me."

"What better pueblo? If your life bleeds away here on this trail, it will all be over," shouted the mob.

Pablo tells them, "Not for me. When this life is over, I'll just be beginning a better one. In this life I have a mud hut. In that one, I'll have a mansion. Here I walk dirt trails, there I'll walk streets of gold."

One of the men says, "You're crazy, Pablo. If we shoot you, you'll never walk again."

Another interrupts, "What's he talking about? Let him finish."

"All right, Pablo, what are you talking about? This might be interesting," the first man says.

All Indian men carry a woven bag called a "morral". They carry papers, food, or money since their native white bloomer type pants have no pockets. Christian men carry their Bible and hymnbook carefully wrapped in

plastic in them. Pablo (indicating his bag) says, "Untie my hands and give me my 'morrall'."

The first man after searching the bag for a pistol, gives the bag to Pablo saying, "This has nothing but a book and a flash light." Little does he know that the book is more powerful than all their weapons.

Pablo knowingly says, "That's all I need."

Tension grows among the men. They knew Pablo when he was a slave to liquor like all of them. They worked together using their earned money to buy a quart of the "aguaardiente" (fire water). They drank together. They became drunk together. Then something happened to Pablo. Now after work he goes home. He reads this book and sings a lot. All of them secretly desired to change, also, but they were afraid to be different.

They untie his hands and listen closely as he reads his Bible by the thin ray of light from his flashlight.

*"Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God believe also in me. In my father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a*

*place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14:1-3).

"You see," explained Pablo, "I have a mansion prepared for me with my name, Pablo Chavez Montano, on it. When this life is over, I'll go there to live."

Never had the men seen Pablo speak with such confidence. Drinking 1½ quarts of cane liquor a day for years had caused his speech to be unsure and slurred, giving the impression he was not very bright. The slow speech remained, but now there was a new confidence in his voice. How these other men longed for that confidence but their "machismo" demanded they laugh at his foolish talk. What would the others think if they pleaded for a mansion in another life? So, they forced a subdued laugh.

Chinto, the leader, seems unimpressed, and he is pointing the rifle at Pablo. Lowering the rifle he silently thinks, "What good does it do? He isn't even scared." Out loud he says, "Let the fool go. How can he hurt us with such ridiculous talk?"

Pablo, not wanting to leave, says, "But there's more..."

Angrily Chinto interrupted, "Not now, Pablo. We have been sent here to guard, not talk nonsense."

Knowing it is useless to insist, Pablo continues. In his heart he resolves to go to the homes of these men and finish the talk. Individually he will win some of them. Every man comes to a point in his life when he must choose between God and the world. Pablo had reached that point. He decided for God and how glad he is. How well he remembers the misery and fear before God saved him.



*Pablo and Teresa*



## 2

### Early Life

Pablo Chavez Montano was the third child and only boy of the five children born to Antonio and Maria Guadalupe. As the trip to town cost money, many Aztec children were not registered at birth. Pablo does not know his exact birthdate, but it was in 1945. His parents

were Catholic like all their neighbors. Their religion included many superstitions carried on since pre-Spanish days—days of witchdoctors, spells and fear. Life was hard for all.

Life for these people came from the ground. Each man was given a small plot of land from the community. They did not own it, for all land belonged to the "pueblo". They were allowed to use it to grow their crops on it. Their cooking pots and water bottles were made from mud. Mud was even used for healing. From this land mud was taken to build a house.

The house, itself, was really just one room. The walls were mud. Only a door and one small window allowed light to enter. The floor was packed with hardened mud. Furnishing was very scarce. There were a small low table, perhaps two chairs, and straw mats to sleep on. These mats were rolled up in the day and stored in a corner. They would be spread on the floor at night for sleeping. In one corner a cooking fire would be built. The house had a hole in the wall for smoke to escape, but much of the smoke stayed inside, making the room hazy. There was no bathroom, running water, or electricity.

Pablo's father was an alcoholic as were so many of the men. Centuries of slavery under the Spanish had broken the spirit of the Aztec. Even though the Mexican revolution brought all Mexicans freedom, it did not give back the pride and wealth these people once had. As did all the men, Antonio worked his small plot of land growing in a good year enough beans and corn to feed his family and trade for other necessities. After work he drank "fire water" with the other men. He was trying to forget the reality of suffering in his life.

Pablo's mother got up before sunrise every morning. Water had to be brought from the river. Corn left soaking the night before had to be ground between two rocks. One of them was flat, and the other was round and long like a rolling pin. The wet corn was placed on the long rock and rolled until a soft dough was formed. This dough was patted out by hand and cooked on a round flat "comal". The "comal" was made of baked clay. It was supported by two large rocks on each side of the fire. In a clay pot she would also cook the black beans that completed her family's diet. Later in the day

she would wash the family's clothes in the river, laying them on rocks to dry.

Both the men and women worked hard. Each family hoped to have both girls and boys to help the parents with their work. None of the children were sent to school more than three years. Many, especially the girls, were not sent at all. After all, they didn't need to read and write in order to know how to make tortillas. Little joy or hope for change found its way into their lives.

Pablo started to school when he was six years old. He was an average student. He enjoyed the classes although they were in Spanish. Nahuatl was spoken in his home. The teacher said he must learn Spanish and leave the dialect behind. Pablo enjoyed playing at recess. The games were simple but children invent new games in every society. Pablo enjoyed school.

Education could have been his way to find a better life, but it was not to be. Before he finished first grade, it was necessary for Pablo to leave school.

Because of the continued drinking of his father, there was no one to support the family.

Pablo was the only boy and, therefore, he was taken from school to work to help to support his mother and sisters. So, at the age of 7, Pablo found himself carrying the responsibility of a man. He worked hard and gave what little he earned to his mother.

In a society where daily survival is the main goal, a boy of 7 or 8 years old can do a man's work. Necessity forces these people to think of "today" and not of the good an education could bring in twenty years.

His father continued in his drunkenness until about the age of 55. Then the fire water that had for years been destroying his life, took it. Pablo automatically became the head of the household. He was near the age of 14.



### 3

## Following Old Paths

In a society where there is little hope for change or improvement, the people must find a way to escape or forget. In the Aztec Society the women escape to a world of work and child bearing. They have the ability to work endless hours caring for the necessities of their families.

But the men have the responsibility to provide for the family. This responsibility makes them see too clearly the hopelessness of their condition. They continue to just survive much as their ancestors have for centuries. They have nothing but the same to leave to their sons.

To try to escape this life the men turn to the "aguardiente" (fire water). This is simply fermented sugar cane juice, or as some would say "white lightning". It does not make their life any better. In reality it makes it worse by using up their precious money. But it does help them to forget for a while, and in their society it proves their "machismo" (manhood).

Everyday after they had worked the field, a man would come with a keg of fire water. The men would gather in groups of 10 or 15 to drink. There from exhaustion and without hope of betterment, they would drink away their desperation. Some would fall in the field to sleep it off. Others would stumble or crawl home. Pablo Chavez was to become known as one of the "better men". He could down his quart and still walk home to sleep it off.

After having watched his father die from the

effects of the "fire water", it would seem that Pablo would never touch it. But at the age of 14 when he became the head of his household, he became a man. In his society men drink, and so he did, too.

It was hard for Pablo to accept the responsibility of his mother and sisters. But in his heart he knew women cannot earn a living. He must provide for the sisters until they married, and for his mother for the rest of his or her life. It was hard, but at least he was treated as a man. His food was prepared and set in front of him. When he arrived from the field, the most important thing was to prepare his meal. His sisters hand-made the thick tortillas to be eaten with the hot, black beans. He liked to be a man. It was much better than being a boy.

Each morning started like every other. Before the sun came up, he heard his sisters. One went to the river to bring water. One started the fire. Another was grinding the corn for the day's tortillas. When the coffee was ready, he would get up. His body was tired and would rather stay in the warm bed. But men work. He was a man. He liked being a man.

About mid-morning, one of his sisters brought hot beans and a whole pile of those thick, delicious tortillas to the field where he was working. How he loved the taste of fresh tortillas! He was sitting in the shade with the other men eating. Pablo was a very quiet boy, but the others talked.

"Well, Pablo, you have learned to work like a man," one says.

"Yes, but you are still a boy," another adds.

All laugh. Pablo knows what they mean. He works hard all day but he doesn't stay and drink with the men. He doesn't want to drink. In his heart he knows it is bad, so he says nothing.

Day after day the men continued. One day Pablo could no longer stand it. "I will stay and drink today," he firmly declared.

And he does. Oh, he did not drink a quart that first day. How the liquor burned his mouth and throat! Later he was sick. Worst of all, that night after all is quiet, Pablo heard his mother crying. She knew it had started in her son's life just like all the rest.

Aztec culture does not leave room for casual dating. When a man decides to marry, his father makes the arrangement with the father of the

girl, and the wedding takes place. The young people have very little to say in the matter. Neither is it a matter of infatuation. A girl is judged by whether she is of good character and strong body.

When Pablo reached the age to marry, it was his mother that chose his wife, Teresa.

Teresa's father had died leaving her mother alone with her little children. It is impossible for a woman alone to support her children. Society only allows men the privilege of working for money. For this reason, Teresa's mother quickly remarried, thinking it was surely better than for her children to starve. She soon had a new family to care for. The stepfather resented Teresa and her sisters, refused them even basic necessities, and very often beat them.

At a very early age Teresa went to live and work in the home of another family. Often she felt sad. She was away from her family and was only given a place to stay and food to eat. In return, she worked hard from early until late. Water had to be carried from the river; corn had to be washed, soaked and ground for tortillas.

Teresa did not mind the work for here they did not beat her, and she could eat. Teresa was a very strong-willed person. Even the beatings of her step-father and constant work as a child did not break her spirit. She carried her head high and smiled often as she worked. It was these qualities that made Pablo's mother notice her and decide that she would be a good wife for her only son and a good mother for her grandchildren. So, in the simple way of her people, she told Pablo it was time he married and that the girl had been chosen. As his father was dead, Pablo would have to ask for Teresa's hand himself.

Pablo would never dream of going against his mother, so, on the appointed day he returned from the field early. He had thought of marriage. It was right that a man have a wife. It would be nice to have his wife to prepare his meals. Maybe soon they would have children. Pablo bathed in the river before going home. It was strange to bathe so early and to be sober.

There was no real courtship. Pablo simply went to the home where Teresa worked and asked for her hand. It was agreed. Pablo saw

Teresa larger than most Aztec women. That was good. She would be strong to help him with the work.

On the wedding day there was a simple, civil ceremony, and Teresa becomes Pablo's wife. Even without all the pre-marital dating, Pablo knew that Teresa was his responsibility. She would help him work and mother his children, and he would care for her.

Basically Pablo is a very gentle man. Even when drinking he was never mean to Teresa. She appreciated this. After many years of beatings and having nothing, now she had her home. It was only one room which she shared with her mother-in-law and unmarried sister-in-law but she knew no one would throw her out.

Pablo now had another reason to live. Teresa worked hard doing more than her share of the work. She smiled when he talked to her. She looked right at him and smiled. He liked that. A very simple but genuine love grew.

Early in the second year of marriage, a baby girl was born. Chela was a healthy little baby. Teresa knew that all Aztec men hoped the first child was a boy, but Pablo was very gentle,

declaring that it was good to have a girl to help with the work at home.

Pablo wanted to give his family more. How he tried to quit the fire water, but he could not. Teresa did not seem as strong since Chela was born. She was very pale, lost weight, and was always tired. Her condition continued to worsen until she could no longer do her work.

Pablo did not have much money, but he carried Teresa to doctor after doctor. They did not help her.

Before the Spanish came, the Aztecs worshiped the sun, moon, stars, etc. Their society also had its witch doctors. These men or women used plants, herbs and such to make medicine and also performed rituals to the different "gods" of nature. There are still many of these witch doctors in the Aztec villages. Deep within Pablo was this sincere desire to help Teresa; so, they began seeing the witch doctor.

The Aztec people are very afraid of these witch doctors and their spells. The people pay them to make "spells" to ward off evil spirits or to put an evil spell on an enemy. When babies are born, the parents often give them two

names. One, the real name, is registered on the birth certificate. The other name, the false one, is used. This way the witches cannot cast an evil spell on the person because they don't know their real name.

The witches told Pablo that Teresa's sickness was caused by the evil in his life. Only by following all their instructions exactly could he save her. He tried. He said all the rituals. He lit candles. He put out food to appease the evil spirits. But mostly, he paid the witch doctor. On every visit he paid 100 pesos, tamales and a quart of the burning water.

Pablo now had new fears. The witch has told him there is a skeleton under his house. He feared the evil spirit that would come to claim it. He feared the snake, which the witch had told him, waited for him in the field. Still he feared for Teresa as she got sicker each day.

At this point Pablo's life was at its low point. Everything seemed against him. How he yearned for a change—a new beginning.





#### 4

## The Search

Pablo, being a very quiet man, spent more time observing people than talking to them. Estella, his sister, seemed to have a new joy. For some time Pablo had noticed a change in her life. He didn't know what it was but he decided to ask her.

What she told him scared him but interest grew in his heart. In a nearby village a man named Porfirio was preaching a new religion. Surely the religion they had was good enough. It had been good enough for their people for 500 years since the Spanish brought it from Spain. But Estella was so sure and so happy. Pablo just had to know. One night he walked to Atlaltipa to hear Porfirio preach. Because he had drunk the burning water, he couldn't understand. When the sermon was over, Porfirio talked to him. When he saw Pablo could not understand, Porfirio gave him a New Testament, telling him to read until he found the answer.

Pablo couldn't read, but Teresa could. So they began to read together. Pablo carried the New Testament everywhere he went. Following along as Teresa read, he also began to learn to read. Years later, Pablo would say that Teresa and the Spirit of God taught him to read with only one textbook, the Bible.

How strange were the words. Pablo had never heard of God's love and grace. His religion had been like an unloving mother. He

went to her at birth for baptism, first communion, marriage, and would go at death for last rites. She had never cared for his daily life. She had never cared to help him overcome his drunkenness. She had never taught him of God's saving grace. How could a holy God love him—a drunkard who couldn't care for his family. He read and read, but his life didn't change. He worked in the field all day, drank the burning water, stumbled home to sleep until day to return to the field.

One day after work, the men sat down to drink. Even after drinking Pablo felt the deep yearning for a change in his life. He did not understand how the change would come, but he knew it would come from the New Testament he carried in his bag. Reaching for his bag, he took out the New Testament and began to read to his friends. They were drunk, but all listened.

Pablo explained that all of them needed to change, stop drinking, and read the Word of God. But just like the eunuch in Acts 8—how could they understand, except some man should show them. One day soon that man

would be Pablo. First God would make the change in his life.

One day in January, Andres, a friend, asked Pablo to help him cut some bamboo poles to build a room on his house. All day the men worked side by side cutting and stacking the poles. Finishing their work Andres said, "Pablo, I didn't bring any liquor, but if you will wait, I will go and get some."

Pablo replied, "Better that you don't go. In my heart I feel sad. It is better that we go and hear the Word of God. Some missionaries are going to come to Coyolapa."

Andres, did not quite understand, and asked again, "Then you don't want me to go for the liquor?"

Pablo, still sure, said, "No, better that you don't go."

"Do you know what day they are coming?" asked Andres.

"They said next Tuesday. Why don't we go?" asked Pablo.

The devil, working his part in the heart of Andres, brought excuses to his mouth, "But I've been studying the Bible for over a year with the

Seventh Day Adventists. It hasn't changed my life, and it won't change yours."

But Pablo, unaffected by the opposition of Andres, replied, "Next Tuesday we're going to listen to the missionaries. Estella has told me they have a message of One who can change us and give us a new life. I want to change."

All these days the Spirit of God stayed near Pablo calling him and preparing his heart for the message of salvation he would soon hear. When Tuesday finally arrived, Pablo came home early. He didn't bathe and dress up, but went in his native white pants, sandals, and he wore no shirt. God wasn't looking at the outside. He had chosen this man to carry the Gospel to his people, the Aztec Indians. This night Pablo would be washed in the blood of Jesus and cleaned like a new babe.

The devil still hadn't given up. His last stand was made at Andres' house. Arriving Pablo called, "Andres, let's go to Coyolapa to hear the missionaries."

Andres, also still in his work clothes, said, "No, I'm not going. I still haven't eaten."

Tonight Pablo would not be put off. He

wanted to go, but he did not want to go alone. He needed the support of his friend. He told Andres, "You told me you would go and you are going to go with me."

Reluctantly, Andres accompanied Pablo through the woods to the village that neither of them knew. This was to be the most important night of their lives. At long last that deep yearning of Pablo's heart for a change in his life would be lifted for this night Pablo Chavez Montano was to be born again into the family of the King.

At about the time Pablo and Andres left Pochoica, the missionaries were preparing to leave Huejutla. Only five months ago the Buddy Johnson Family had moved to Huejutla when bad health had forced Bro. Gene McCann to retire. Several months before that, at a BMA missions retreat, plans had been made for simultaneous revivals in Mexico and Central America. Each American missionary had invited American pastors to visit his field. The purpose was to raise mission interest in the states. All the churches in the states were being encouraged to pray for the revivals. Brethren

Gaylan Henry, Harry Attebery, Jerry Burnaman and Burt Jones had driven with Bro. and Mrs. McCann to participate in this joint effort in Huejutla and the missions in the Aztec villages nearby. The fellowship in the missionary's home was sweet, and they were all praying for one end—the salvation of souls and changing of lives. That prayer was to be abundantly answered that night.

8500



## 5

### From the Shadows

In Coyolapa the lantern was lit when darkness began to gather. In this remote village without electricity, a lantern could be seen all over the village. Most houses were lit only by a candle. The bright light of the lantern meant

there was to be a church service. Night was indeed dark. The lantern was an open invitation to all in the village to come and hear the Word of God. Come they did. It was an open air service. The believers gathered in the circle of light around the lantern. Those who came out of need or curiosity stood or sat beyond this circle. There sat Pablo and Andres. Bro. Johnson says of the night that he remembers seeing this man in the shadows. The light reached only the lower half of his body, revealing his arms folded in front. The man wore white pants, sandals and his machete was still strapped to his waist. Pablo was a little over weight. The image that Bro. Johnson remembers is that of a trouble maker. All through the service Pablo never lifted his head to reveal his face. His sombrero, pulled low, covered all expression he might have had.

Bro. Harry Attebery from Springhill, Louisiana brought the message that night. Bro. Johnson translated into Spanish, and Bro. Caterino Morales translated into the Aztec dialect, Nahuatl. In all this mass of languages the Holy Spirit spoke to the heart of Pablo. The

message of the Philippian jailer from Acts 16 spoke to Pablo's heart. The preacher spoke as though he knew Pablo personally and knew all the things he had done. He spoke as if he knew of Pablo's being a slave to drink. Pablo realized that just as those men in the Bible were prisoners, so was he. He wanted to be set free. Was the God of these Americans big enough to free him? During this message, Pablo asked forgiveness for his sins. In his words, he was very sad for his sins. That night his new life began. He had been set free for eternity.

After the service all that wanted Bibles were invited to buy them at half price. Those who did not have the money, could pay later. The missionaries thought that giving the Bibles free would not encourage the people to care for them. If they buy their Bibles, they would care for them. They are carefully covered and carried in a plastic bag for protection. That night Pablo bought two Bibles, one for himself, and one for Andres. It was as if from the very beginning he had decided to influence others.

Giving the Bible to Andres, Pablo told him, "Andres, from today on, since we have accepted Christ, we are not going to drink. I am not going to drink and neither are you. We will leave this vice behind," and they did.



## 6 New Faith

The very next day Pablo was to have his faith tested. After the usual day's work, the group gathered to talk and drink before going home. The seller of the "cana" (fire water) came to the field. It was customary that all take turns drinking

from the "common cup". When it came to Pablo, he weakened. Refusing the cup he said, "No, I'm not going to drink because I visited a doctor and he prohibited it." One day he would have the courage to say, "I don't drink because I belong to Jesus Christ." His new faith must grow. Until then he would use excuses to avoid the vice he hated, but he would never return to drinking. Drinkers don't like to drink alone, so, the usual persuasion began. Pablo was strong in his refusal, finally leaving to walk home alone, leaving his friends behind. He did not feel alone. Even leaving his lifelong friends, he felt the presence of his new Friend who had promised never to leave him.

The next months were not easy for Pablo. He walked alone many times. Although Teresa followed him in his new decision, his friends and neighbors did not. The devil does not like to turn loose of any of his slaves. Pablo was given many opportunities to return to the fire water and degradation of his previous life, but he would not. As he had said, he was leaving those things behind and entering a new life. Pablo did not have to tell these people about

the change Christ had made in his life. They could see the change. They could see this sober man who before had always been drunk. They could see his children now had food to eat. They could see the improving health of his wife.

Many were also alcoholics. They wanted to change like Pablo had, but it takes much courage to be different. Christ says, "*Come ye out from among them and be ye separate.*" That can be hard, and only the very brave can do it. Pablo had made the separation, and many of his neighbors would.

Pablo liked to visit his neighbors telling them of Christ. After asking if he could read the Bible with them, he would pray, asking the Spirit to lead him. Then he would open his Bible and read. As the Spirit led him, he explained. Sometimes, if no one objected, he would read several chapters. If the man accepted Christ, he was invited to the group studies in Pablo's home. If he did not accept Christ, Pablo asked if he could return to read more. The power of God's Word was shown as more and more of Pablo's neighbors were also changed.

During this time Pablo relates that he was

reading to a man. This day it seemed the Spirit was not directing. Pablo did not understand what he read. He stopped to pray and read some more. Still he did not understand. He asked his neighbor if he understood. He didn't. They read some more. Then, still not understanding, Pablo prayed again. Pablo felt led to read in another part of the Bible. Later, he said, "It is very hard to win souls reading from Numbers."

The months that followed were active, busy ones. Pablo and Teresa were blessed with a baby boy whom they named Buddy Johnson (as they spelled it—Veriyonson). What a joy it was to Teresa to watch her sober husband hold his long-awaited son. They continually read the Bible together. She patiently taught him to read and thanked God that her husband had changed. Her health was improving daily.

From the beginning Pablo was a "fisher of men". He was no great speaker, but daily after work he took his Bible and visited his neighbors telling them about Jesus Christ who had changed his life. Not just his words but his life proved that he had changed. Slowly some

began to accept. Pablo didn't really know what to do next, but it seemed right to invite them to his house to read the Bible. They would meet and just read the precious Word of God, letting the Spirit direct them. Not one of them had any training, but God's Word instructed them daily.

Pablo's desire was to win his whole village for Christ. There was much hatred for his new religion. Many would not come to his house to read the Bible. That didn't upset Pablo. If they wouldn't come to his house, he would go to theirs. Regularly and systematically, he visited every home in his village, witnessing to the men. In Aztec culture the man decides for his family. "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" Some women oppose their husbands, but most gladly follow.

Nobody had ever taught Pablo how to win souls. He had no "Four Spiritual Laws" or any other help. What he did have was his experience, his Bible, and the Holy Spirit. That was enough.

Now, in place of staying in the field to drink after work, Pablo went home. He cleaned up and spent time with Teresa and the children. In the

late afternoon when most people had eaten, but were not ready to sleep, Pablo visited.



## 7

### The New Religion

The church in this area works very similar to the first church we read about in the Bible. As people are saved, they go to work witnessing for Jesus. That means house to house, in the market, at school, or wherever they go. To break

from the established church is to break all ties with family and friends. It is not a casual decision, but sometimes a life-threatening one. For this reason when a person accepts Jesus, he is ready to go to work for Him.

The villages are close together. Some do not have roads to them and can only be reached by walking, but news travels fast. After 500 years of slavery to a religion that lets its people continue in drunkenness and sin, a new religion that changes people had come. This new religion made men clean up, stop drinking and love their families. This news travels fast. This is what happens. In Atlaltipa and Itzocatl there are BMA Baptist churches. Members of these churches are different. These men don't spend their money on the fire water. In every village the Christian families live better than their neighbors. Many of them have relatives and friends in other villages. These relatives and friends see the change in their lives. Many of them visit the churches. They are saved and changed. Then they want the missionary to come to their village. The missionary goes to

their village. A new mission is begun. This forms a chain which continues endlessly.

This was Pablo's desire to see a mission begun in his village.

In the church in Atlaltipa every Thursday and Friday there was a Bible Institute. Brethren Caterino Morales, Mike Holcombe and Buddy Johnson gave classes to the men who wanted to preach the Gospel. Nine months after his salvation, Pablo enrolled.

The first day he came, Bro. Johnson slightly remembered him as the man who came out of the shadows to accept Jesus. One thing all three missionaries noticed was how worn Pablo's Bible was. It looked like a very old Bible, but it was only nine months old. Pablo had literally worn it out reading it.

Pablo is still very timid and awkward. He drank so many years that his speech is slow. He tends to look at his toes when talking to another person, and he usually wears a hat.

After classes Pablo came forward asking, "Bro. Johnson, can you come to my house tonight?"

"Well, Bro. Pablo, we had already planned to

go to another village tonight. But another night we will be more than glad to go," replied Bro. Johnson.

"But, I really want you to go tonight," insisted Pablo. "I've told my friends you would come. A few of us study the Bible in my home." Pablo's voice revealed his urgent desire for his friends to understand more of the Bible than he could teach them.

"Couldn't just one of you come?" he pleaded.

"Yes, one of us can go," was the reply.

As it turned out two of them went, Bro. Johnson and Bro. Caterino.

Here, in Bro. Johnson's words, is what happened that night.

"Bro. Pablo had not heard another Bible message since the night in January when he had his life changing experience with Jesus Christ. However, he, in his way, had preached almost every day. Upon arriving at his home, we found that a path had been cleared with machetes through the jungle underbrush. This path was just wide enough for our jeep to pass.

With much difficulty we crossed a winding stream twice and arrived at a clearing where there

was a small, one room, thatched roofed hut. Pablo spoke in Nahuatl to the gathered children who quickly scattered among the other houses. Within a few minutes about 40 men, and a few women and children gathered, and one of the biggest and best surprises of my life began. Pablo, led by the Spirit of God, had led all those people to his newly found Savior within these few months.

“My joy began to grow as I saw the love of Jesus passing from Pablo Chavez to his new ‘mission’. In the months and years that followed, four of the men in that ‘first’ service became missionary pastors just like Pablo. One of them was Chinto, the man with the gun.”



*Veriyonson (Buddy Johnson)*



## 8

### New Dangers

About the time Pablo was saved, a leftist political movement was sweeping through this part of Mexico. The general idea was to invade the land of the "rich" and divide it among the "poor". Believers did not take part. The people

in this part of Mexico are descendents of the Aztec tribe. Much of the land is "ejidal" (that is, reservation land belonging to the tribe and divided among the members to be farmed). Through the years some of these lands had been sold outside the tribe. Recognizing this, the government decided to return these lands to the Indians.

But rather than look for an orderly way to return the land, each village was told which lands to "invade". As the Indians just took lands, destroying houses and livestock, the "owners" fought back. There was much bloodshed. For this reason the native pastors counseled their people not to participate, but the village obligated them to help. It was a very difficult time for Christians.

On the one hand, they didn't want to take up arms and kill, but if they didn't, they often lost their tribal rights, including their houses and lands.

When this movement entered his village, Pablo, being a peaceful man, counseled his people not to help "rob and kill". This angered the political group and they boarded up the

house where services were held forbidding any further meetings.

After much prayer, Pablo, came to Huejutla to see Bro. Johnson. Pablo arrived early one morning. Relating the problem, Pablo and Bro. Johnson prayed together. Pablo was not fearful for his life. In his words he felt honored to suffer for his Savior. Even as a drunk, he had loved his family, but now as a Christian, he felt he wanted to make up for the lost years. If he were killed, what would happen to Teresa and the children? Teresa had suffered so as a child at the hand of an unloving step-father. To knowingly risk his life without providing for her, was a greater hardship than Pablo could ask of Teresa.

That morning this Aztec pastor and his missionary friend cried and prayed together. Pablo committed himself to go to the village and preach; Bro. Johnson committed himself and the BMA churches to care for his family if the threats were carried out.

As Pablo left Huejutla he had a song in his heart even though he faced possible death.

That afternoon Pablo made another decision. He went house to house inviting all to the

service. He took the boards off the doors and windows. Then another decision had to be made. Normally they would play the accordion calling people to service. Should they tonight or should they be quieter, hoping not to draw attention? The group was small as they began.

Trusting in God, they took out the accordion and began to sing, not knowing if anyone would come. They sang one hymn, and then another. A shadow appeared in the door and entered. Joy filled Pablo's heart as he saw it was a believer.

One by one the faithful men came and sat in the flickering lantern light. Together they lifted their voices and sang praises. Like a bubbling stream, on the desert, their praise filled their hearts with joy.

It was then that Pablo saw the shadows that did not enter. They stood at every door and window. Each one held a gun. The moment came for the message. Pablo opened his Bible reading, "*The just shall live by faith*". In his way he delivered the message of faith to the believers.

When he had finished, one of the shadows

outside stepped inside the door demanding, "Is that all?"

"Yes."

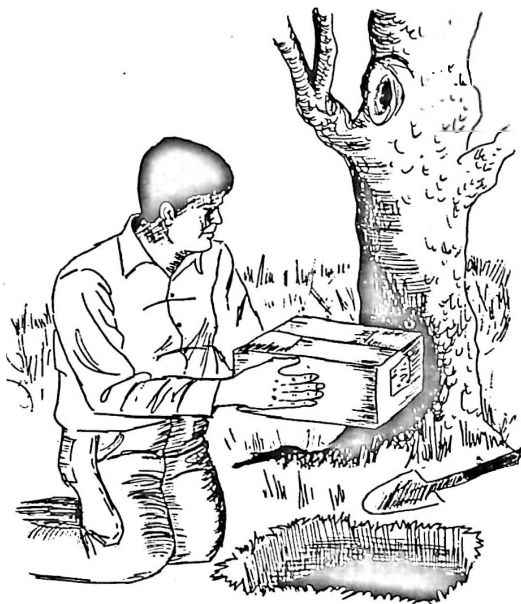
"When does the political meeting start?" further demanded the shadow.

"There is no political meeting. All we do is study the Bible and praise God."

"Then you are no threat," said the officer. With those words all the armed shadows faded away into the darkness of the night. A service of thanksgiving followed, and services have been regular since that day.



*Pablo, Andres (who was saved the same night) and Octaviano (who Pablo won to the Lord).*



## 9

### **New Responsibilitites**

Again Pablo and Teresa were blessed with a baby girl, Juanita. She was a healthy, lovely baby. Together, the family rejoiced.

A year later Pablo and Teresa rejoiced to know that God would again bless their home

with a child. Teresa didn't feel very well but time passed.

With no electric lights the evenings were often spent visiting. The believers would visit, testify and sing together. That night Pablo, Teresa and Chinto had sung many hymns recording them to play for new believers to learn.

Later than normal, Chinto left. Pablo and Teresa spread out the straw mats. The children were asleep. Teresa did not feel well. Sometime in the night she was very cold. She got up taking a cover to wrap herself. The next morning their third daughter was still-born.

This time there was no joy. Teresa was ill. Only her mother-in-law helped with the birth. Teresa and the baby were still lying on the straw mat on the floor. She knew it was dead, but could not lift up to see it. Pablo covered it and sat in the corner without speaking. It was Chela who moved, breaking the silence. Uncovering the little baby, she touched the tiny hand asking, "Mama, why did my baby sister die?" Then, the family cried together.

In these remote areas of Mexico there are no funeral homes. The mourning family cares for

all details. Burial is by law within 24 hours, as there is no embalming.

Pablo realized he couldn't leave his wife with only his mother and the children. In his heart he knew he must care for Teresa, his children and the dead baby. But how could he? His heart felt as it would surely jump out of his mouth. He felt he could not endure the pain of his grief.

Chela's words forced him to reality. Rising, he sent his mother to prepare food for the children. She left, taking the children with her. In Atlalpexco he could buy a little cedar casket for the baby. He could not be gone the three hours it would take to walk there, so, he looked for another way. His eyes stopped on a small cardboard box that his Sunday School books came in. Yes, it would fit. Carefully, he wrapped the baby in a clean blanket and put the limp body in the box. Teresa watched, but did not speak. She was too weak and she knew Pablo was a good man and would do right.

Carrying the little box and a shovel, Pablo left Teresa. Teresa cried for herself and for the pain she knew Pablo felt.

After walking a short distance, Pablo gently

placed the box on the ground and began to dig under a large tree. He felt as if he were choking, but continued to dig until the hole was deep enough. Placing the box in the hole, he covered it, leaving a small mound of dirt. He felt a great pain inside, but he knew he should say some words over the baby. He didn't know what to say, so, he asked God, and He gave him these words, "*Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him but he shall not return to me.*"

Suddenly the pain went away. He sang a hymn and prayed, and returned to his home to comfort and care for his family.

Two years later God did give Pablo and Teresa another daughter. It was another difficult time for Teresa, but joy filled their home as she saw their completed family of 3 daughters and their son, Verijonson, whom they call affectionally, Bro. Johnson.



## 10 New Joys

When God changed Pablo it was complete. Pablo never looked back and never picked up the fire water again.

Where there was no joy, now there is only joy. Arriving at his home sober is a joy.

Seeing his healthy wife and children is a joy.  
Experiencing the many blessings of God is a  
joy.

But Pablo's greatest joy comes in preaching  
the Word and opening new ground with the  
Word of God.

