

MASTERS COURSE IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

This past January 11-15, I taught a Masters Degree course at the Theological Community of Mexico titled "Theological Interpretation of Biblical Texts." We had twelve students who came from a variety of churches, including Methodist, Reformed, Presbyterian, Baptist, Disciples of Christ, Church of God, and several other independent churches. As you can imagine, it was an interesting mix of students to work with.



In the last couple of years, the Theological Community has been offering this type of intensive courses for its Masters Degree programs, which are in Biblical Studies, Liturgy, and Theology. The intensive courses, which are a week long in duration, make it possible for students who live outside of Mexico City to participate in the programs. We had students from six different Mexican states. In the photo below, for example, from the left, there is Felipe, who came from Nayarit on the west coast of Mexico; Salvador, who came from southern Baja California; and on my other side, Abel, who came from the southern Mexican state of Guerrero, where he works in a rural setting with indigenous students. All three, like several other of the students, are involved in training pastors and leaders in their own contexts.

**MEXICO'S SOURCES OF INCOME**

For decades, the country of Mexico has had two primary sources of income: revenues from the sale of crude oil and the funds sent from Mexicans who work in the U.S. and other countries back to their families and relatives. These funds are called "remesas" or remittances. With the recent drop in oil prices, income from the exportation of crude oil has dropped significantly. In 2015, the total income from crude oil exports was 18.5 billion dollars, which was down significantly from 2014. Whereas in 2014, the average price of a barrel of Mexican oil was \$87.63, in 2015 the average price was \$39.43. The most recent price has been around \$27 per barrel.



According to government figures, in 2015, the total amount of remittances sent to Mexico was almost 25 billion dollars, up about a billion dollars from the previous year. That represented more than 84 million transfers of money, which averaged \$292 per transfer.

The income from tourism to Mexico has traditionally been the third major source of the country's income. Over the past few years, that total has been over 10 billion dollars per year.

In recent years, however, the automobile industry has overtaken the three traditional main sources of income. In each of the past couple of years, the auto industry generated over 45 billion dollars for the country. It is unclear how much money enters Mexico from the illegal traffic of drugs. Some estimates put the amount at about 20 billion dollars per year.

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