



# INTERNATIONAL

*"Hola, me llamo Tim. Mmmm . . . uhhuh . . . umm . . . oh . . . perdon, no hablo ingles. Si. No, I mean, no español, ha, ha, ha . . . me llamo español."*

Here is a stunning example of a typical conversation I had during my first weeks here in Mexico. If you're not as fluent in Spanish as I am, I will translate. The first sentence is a warm greeting along with a presentation of the name I am called. This is the point where I confuse my listener into thinking that I am a Mexican, at which point they begin to tell me their lifestory. I feign recognition and empathy until I realize that they have stopped, usually a clear indication that they are through talking. I pick up on this ever so subtle clue and apologize, explaining that I indeed do not speak English. For a moment they are confused until we both realize that I have used the wrong word. We are both rather amused and have an intimate moment of humor and understanding until I tell them in Spanish that I am not called Spanish, which is when they sic their dog on me ☺.



*Steve Griswell teaching Tim how to use a public phone.*

How many times have you thought, *"If I could only start over again knowing what I know now."* But no one ever wishes that they could begin now knowing only what they knew then . . . and now I know why! I'm an adult walking around with a three-year old's vocabulary. *"Excuse me. How do you say 'humility' in Spanish?"* Thank God . . . and I do regularly . . . that I have Annette, the Spanish major, by my side. She could tell you better than I could how many times she has gotten us off the bus or subway at the right stop. Or how often she has saved the day by explaining to dumbfounded people that I meant "I'm so embarrassed" and not "I'm so pregnant."

It is also wonderful to be living with a young Mexican family with whom we click. Rene and Monica Martinez are the parents. They have two little girls: Alexis (5) and Daniela (7

months). Many foreign students have been guests in their home before us, so they provide us just the right balance between privacy and interaction. Not to mention all the great cultural hints and cues that we otherwise would not have picked up on. Annette has had quite a few good conversations with Monica concerning spiritual matters. Like many Americans they more or less believe all religious paths lead to the top of the same spiritual mountain. (HINT: There is a prayer request hidden in the last two sentences.)

As you may remember from our last letter, we are presently in Cuernavaca, Mexico, where we are studying at a language and cultural institute known as Cemanahuac. Cuernavaca is reputed to be "The City of Eternal Spring," which is not bad for a town whose name translates into English as "Horned Cow." It really is a pretty city — ravines and hills everywhere with flowers blooming all over everything. It's like a city built on a giant corrugated tin roof . . . if you aren't going down a hill, you're going up one. And we're getting to know it well because we walk wherever we go.

God has answered a lot of prayers, too. So far we really haven't experienced any noticeable culture shock. And the extra stress on our marriage which we had been warned about has not showed its ugly face yet (well, unless you count the first day of language learning ☺). If you were praying for us, thank you so much! We really are forced to depend on God more now than before. I think it's because, for us, everything is so new and different here. We felt significantly more secure back in the States. Somehow I'm kind of liking the realization of my utter dependence on Him. You probably always knew that, but God has to send some of us away to foreign countries to learn it.

With love,

Tim (Annette says "Hi!" too)