

# Border Summit emphasizes ministry opportunities

November 28, 2018

MATAMOROS, Mexico—More than 100 Christians gathered Nov. 17 in Matamoros to discuss the importance of ministry along the Texas/Mexico border at a Border Summit co-sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Seminario Teológico Bautista Cosme G. Montemayor.

Josue Valerio, director of Texas Baptists' Missions Team, discussed the influx of immigrants through Mexico as an opportunity to renew a commitment to Christ's Great Commission.

"God is in the middle of this disruption," he said. "He is sovereign and omniscient. If there are disruptions in society, that affects the church. How does God want us to respond to what is happening in our society? He wants us to identify ourselves with him."



Raquel Contreras

Raquel Contreras, executive director of the Spanish Publishing House in El Paso, challenged participants at the summit to see the mutual benefit of ministering to immigrants and refugees.

Contreras detailed her personal experience in Chile in 2010, when

thousands of Haitian refugees migrated to the country following a devastating earthquake. Through the last few years, the Haitians and Chileans have equally served and made an impact on each other.

“You see the immigrant as someone to minister to, but they can minister to you, too,” she said. “You see a person who had needs, but in the middle of their needs, they can bless us, also. And we can bless them. It’s a two-way street.”

Guillermo Lozano, health care coordinator and River Ministry missionary, discussed the unique culture of border cities, influenced by the constant exchange of groups, ideas and customs. Lozano detailed the unique history of sister cities and the safe haven the cities provided for much of the 20th Century.

“We have seen evidence of how the gospel has impacted the border. Many of the people living on the border have opened their lives and their families to the gospel,” he said.

Benjamin Roman, director of the Seminario Teológico Bautista Cosme G. Montemayor, discussed challenges churches face with border ministry including deportation, labor slavery, family dysfunction and religiosity. He encouraged Baptists to remember God has provided the church with all the necessary resources for ministry.

“The gospel goes beyond any limit, boundary or border,” Roman said.

For more than 50 years, Mexican Baptists have partnered with Texas Baptists to equip churches on both sides of the border for effective ministry, Roman added. Through River Ministry, resources such as No Mas Violencia, a program to educate families about reducing violence, and the 4xFour evangelism tool have been used in recent years with good results, he noted.

However, Roman cautioned church leaders not to rely solely on the programs, but to allow God to work through each person to share the hope of Jesus with those they encounter.

“We need to reach the border with the transforming message of the gospel,” Roman said.

Mario Alberto Gonzalez, Texas Baptists’ director of multi-housing congregations, discussed pastoral work of the church on the border. He encouraged church leaders to remember God made each believer in Christ a new creation, and Christians serve as ambassadors of Christ.

Additionally, he highlighted the symbiosis of the economy and social aspects of the border. Drawing from Psalm 23, Gonzalez said, the role of pastoral ministry is to provide, guide, care, feed and develop those entrusted to their care.

River Ministry is collecting hygiene kits and donations to purchase basic food supplies, such as rice and beans, for churches ministering to refugees along the border. For more information on border ministry, contact Daniel Rangel, director of Texas Baptists’ River Ministry, at [daniel.rangel@texasbaptists.org](mailto:daniel.rangel@texasbaptists.org) or call (214) 828.5394.