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Kurt Nelson is president of East-West Ministries International, a non-profit, mission organization. His CIU doctoral dissertation involved the study of an undisclosed country in the Caribbean where he has ministered for over 16 years. The country is unnamed because of political opposition to the gospel there.

Removing the Yellow Bracelet

As the local pastor and I entered the broken, desolate neighborhood, I was overwhelmed by God's work among the people of this Caribbean barrio. As we walked the streets, we met Elena in one of these rustic neighborhoods. She had heard the gospel previously, and it made an impression on her, but Elena had not personally turned her life over to Christ. Elena was held captive by the covenant she had made with the idols of the Santería religion — a local religion that blends African voodoo practices and Catholicism.

Elena had Santería idols hidden in her home, and now, they were haunting her. She even wore a bracelet made of yellow beads which symbolized the covenant to Santería that she had made. In the middle of the night, as her family slept, an oppressive spirit woke her as if it was trying to suffocate her. She felt hopeless and didn't know where else to turn but to God. As she cried out to Him, she felt the evil spirit move away from her, and the little puppy at her feet woke up very agitated and began to bark. And then suddenly, the evil spirit left, and the night was filled with peace. Inexplicably — she immediately felt compelled to go outside and to fill the pool she kept on her front porch with water — and then she returned to bed.

We met Elena the following day after this had taken place. As we shared the gospel with her, she instantly knew that she wanted to fully commit her life to Christ this time. Elena prayed to receive Christ and then immediately tore the yellow-beaded bracelet from her wrist. She gathered her Santería idols and handed them to the pastor to destroy for her. Within minutes, the local pastor baptized Elena in the small pool she had mysteriously filled with water the night before.

What happened the next day confirmed the genuine, newfound faith that had invaded Elena's heart less than 24 hours before. Three of her neighbors stopped by her home, and Elena led all three to faith in Christ! Then, on her own accord,

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Elena went to the local Communist Party headquarters and resigned her post as the neighborhood block captain. She told the local authorities that she was dedicating the rest of her life to serving God.

Jesus literally set this "captive" free right before my very eyes!

After 16 years of carrying the gospel to the people of this Caribbean country, I still cannot get over the inestimable privilege we have as Jesus' followers to obey His command to "be My witnesses ... to the uttermost parts of the earth."

God has given me the opportunity to see thousands from this country come to know Christ as their Savior. Beyond that, I have seen God's hand lead these new believers to become disciples, evangelists, pastors and church planters. A rapid church planting movement is taking place in this nation because of the openness and desire for the gospel among these people.

Praise God for His pursuit of His people!

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