

Former Gang Leader Lives 'Dangerously' to Bring Jesus to Kids in the Streets

Steve Camp once wrote a song called "Living Dangerously in the Hands of God." He explained that it didn't mean for Christians to live recklessly, but righteously, in a bold and uncompromised way.

Pastor Sonny Lara knows all about living dangerously for God. A former gang leader who has lived through drug addiction, prison and near-death experiences related to gang warfare—he says he emerged from the very pit of hell—Lara frequently puts his life on the line now to help others escape the same life he previously led.

His mission as a soldier for Christ, through his 30-year ministry the Firehouse Community Development Corporation in the San Jose, California area, has led him to preach the gospel of Christ on the front lines of an intense spiritual battle against demonic forces on a daily basis. He's seen a lot of failures, but he's always seen a great deal of success in helping youth come to the saving knowledge of Jesus.

Lara and his team with Firehouse venture into areas infested with gang activity. He ministers to gang members without fear for his own life because he's been there—he knows what they have been through and what they are faced with, and his reputation precedes him.

"We're in schools and in the streets reaching out to the young people that want to change but don't know how to change," Lara told Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of Greenelines on the Charisma Podcast Network. "We let them know that when you know Jesus, you will know the real truth. Jesus said you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free."

“A lot of these young people are raising themselves. The pandemic has brought lawlessness more than ever. We’re seeing more and more crime with these younger teenagers because they are running the streets with no supervision. We let them know that’s not the road to go. There’s a lot of projects, the homelessness is running rampant. The spirit of lawlessness is running rampant.

“Before we go into any area, our intercessors are always binding. I always go to Matthew 9:37-38. The harvest is great and the laborers are few. We pray to the Lord of harvest that he will send laborers into the harvest field. Then God directs us.”

Without hesitation, Lara estimates that the number of at-risk youth his ministry has rescued numbers into the thousands.

“When we go out, this one lady said, ‘you’re like the pied piper. When you come, they just come out to hear you speak,” Lara says. “The Bible says, wherever you live in the name of Jesus, people will draw unto you.”

For more of Dr. Greene’s interview with Pastor Sonny Lara, tune into this episode of Greenelines. And, be sure to listen to Pastor Sonny Lara’s podcast, Miracle Madness, on the Charisma Podcast Network. {eoa}

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