

Unraveling the Power of Witchcraft—One Warlock at a Time

How an occult leader in Peru transferred his allegiance from Satan to Christ.

Just a year ago, Victor Hugo Perez Vargas was a leader in Peru's vast but secretive occult movement. His strange ability to curse people and cause accidents seemed to be increasing. He was being mentored by a well-known satanist master and he attended witchcraft conferences.

But today you can find Victor sitting on the front row of a Pentecostal church in Tarapoto, Peru, with his wife, Deili. He loves to worship God with his hands raised, he frequently goes to the church altar for prayer and his face glows with a bright smile. "Jesus is my Lord today," Victor says. "The power of the devil cannot be compared to the power of the true God."

Victor's transformation showed me how the Holy Spirit is working in Peru, where occultism has been a tradition ever since ancient Incas sacrificed children on altars to their sun god. Today, occultists from Africa, Europe and the United States attend witchcraft gatherings in Peru because they consider the country a central power center for New Age energy.

Victor, who is 36, was drawn into this occultism as a teenager in the city of Moyobamba, where friends convinced him to have sex with dogs in order to receive supernatural power. Witches told him to do this so he could hear better and see in the spiritual realm. After the perverse initiation rites, he began to hear voices—and he discovered his ability to kill people with his words.

"I didn't know anything about God," Victor told me. "I really didn't understand the devil was using me. I just thought I had a special power."

One man he cursed had a car accident and ended up with a crushed skull. Another man had a motorcycle crash and died six months later. "Every time I cursed people they would suffer in a terrible way. They wouldn't just die immediately," he told me in an interview last Sunday.

Victor eventually moved to Tarapoto, located in north central Peru, and began living with his girlfriend, Deili. But she struggled in the relationship because he often flew into fits of rage and sometimes abused her. "When I realized he could kill people with his curses I wanted to break up with him, but something prevented me from leaving," Deili said.

Deili grew more fearful as Victor climbed higher in the occult hierarchy. He participated in animal sacrifices and went to Cerro de Oso, a high mountain near Tarapoto, to receive satanic authority over the city. He was working to become an occultic master.

Because Victor feared his wife would leave him, he tricked her into participating in a blood covenant, asking demonic forces to track her. She began to feel tormented by ghostly spiritual forces and contemplated suicide often. She even felt unseen powers pushing her to cut her wrists.

All this terror culminated one evening when a group of intercessors from Mision Cristiano Esmirna, a Pentecostal church in Tarapoto, came to Deili's house to pray for her. The demons that had a death grip on Deili began to manifest. Her eyes rolled back in her head and she became violent. Six people could not hold her on the ground.

Later, Teresa Gomez, wife of the pastor at the Esmirna church, came to Deili's house and commanded spirits of death to leave her. Deili was miraculously delivered and gave her life to

Christ.

Two weeks later, Teresa and her husband, David, prayed with Victor to receive Jesus, and they commanded the demons inside him to go. "When we told the spirits to leave, we could hear booming sounds on the ceiling," Teresa explained. "There were strange pounding noises. It was like something was leaving the house."

When Victor shared his testimony with me last Sunday, his eyes were moist with tears. "I came to the Lord because of love—Satan was taking my wife," he said. "I felt this might be my last chance to know Christ. When I got on my knees and repented, I had a vision of the feet of Jesus."

Observers say witchcraft is growing in Peru today, and human sacrifice still occurs—although it is rarely reported. (Several weeks ago, a girl's dismembered body was found in Mayobamba.) Teresa Gomez believes this is all a last-ditch effort by satanic forces.

"These satanists want to take over the nation of Peru," she says. "Witches come here because there was so much blood sacrifice during the Inca times." She also noted that poor families, especially in jungle areas, have been known to sell their children to be sacrificed in occult rituals.

But Victor and Deili's testimony is proof that the gospel of Christ is far more powerful than a network of witches who are trying to renew ancient satanic covenants. Says Victor: "I am not afraid of the devil. I know who I am walking with now."

J. Lee Grady is contributing editor of *Charisma*. You can follow him on Twitter at *leegrady*. Diego Caballero provided translation during Lee's interview with Victor Hugo Vargas.