

Former 'Street God' Takes Jesus to the Projects

Dimas Salaberrios began dealing drugs at age 11. By his mid-20s, he had reached "Street God" status—meaning most drugs dealt in New York City could be traced back to him.

But his crimes caught up with him, and soon Salaberrios was running from the police. He fled to North Carolina, where three women prayed over him. He felt the power of God pour over him and instantly swore off his drug-dealing ways. He returned to New York and turned himself in to the authorities, but the judge was so impressed by his repentance that she pardoned his sentence.

Since then, Salaberrios has made it his mission to bring Jesus to his community. He became a pastor and started Infinity Bible Church in the Bronx River Housing Projects, home to some of the poorest residents in the nation and the birthplace of hip-hop. Church members started a Thursday morning prayer group and walked through the community, praying for the residents. In the last 11 years, the church's impact has been dramatic.

"Former police commissioner Ray Kelly of New York City came and sent his staff to let us know that they documented that crime had basically come to a halt and murders came to a stop from the moment we started our ministry," Salaberrios says. "I couldn't ask for any better PR than the world saying, 'We see the difference in the church, and without them, we would be in trouble.'"

Salaberrios hopes his story can be an inspiration to all Christians.

"Reaching someone like me when I was at the kingpin status is possible," he says. "Those three women were not pastors or

clergy or anything; they were just committed Christians (who) were willing to step in, and when they prayed for me, they shut down a pipeline of drugs coming from New York to North Carolina. They shut down guns being smuggled from North Carolina to New York City, and they shut down a crack and marijuana industry. They're now responsible for thousands upon thousands of people coming to love the Lord. So (I) want to encourage readers that they have the power of God on their side; they don't have to have a title."

To learn more about Salaberrios' testimony and his ministry in the projects, check out his new book, *Street God* (Tyndale Momentum). –*Taylor Berglund*