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Spotlight



An Unlikely Missionary

BY STEFANI MCDADE



CARMEN LACOSTA TOOK AN ONLINE SPIRITUAL GIFTS TEST and was stunned by the result: *Missionary*. She was a new believer and thought her past would disqualify her. Two years earlier, her daughter had passed away, leaving LaCosta to drown in a sea of grief as she relied on drugs and [Continued on pg 46](#)

PHOTOGRAPH BY AUDRA MELTON





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alcohol to get through the day. In the end, it would take the concrete floor of a jail cell and a suicide attempt to bring her to her knees before God. That's when she discovered a new purpose for her life: to share the gospel with everyone she knew.

LaCosta first felt called home to the Caribbean to witness to her family and friends. When she asked her small group at First Baptist Atlanta to pray for her trip, one woman told her about the In Touch Messenger. LaCosta had never been on a mission trip and felt uneasy about walking up to total strangers. But with her friend's encouragement, LaCosta took 150 of the audio Bibles to distribute along the way.

As she walked off the plane, LaCosta was burdened by each Messenger she carried. She stood in baggage claim and prayed for God's guidance. Opening her eyes, she spotted a group of people who were all wearing the same color shirts—and felt the Lord leading her to approach them and explain her situation. Much to her surprise, it was a church missions team, and they graciously invited her to join them.

That week, LaCosta handed out Messengers to the elderly, drug addicts, and families left homeless by Hurricane Maria. As each device left her hand, LaCosta felt more alive—and she recognized

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this truly was the Lord's call on her life. At the end of the trip, the team visited a hospital where a local pastor stood at the bedside of his dying daughter. In that moment, with 100 Messengers left and one day to go, LaCosta knew God was nudging her to entrust the remaining devices into the man's hands.

Two weeks after LaCosta returned to Atlanta, the pastor's daughter passed away. But in the following weeks, the new missionary continued to receive his text messages—pictures of those he was sharing the gospel with on the streets of the city, in halfway houses, rehab centers, and homeless shelters. Each of these smiling men and women with Messengers in hand represented a transformed life like her own. It reminded LaCosta that you don't need a perfect past to be used by God—only a future surrendered to Him.



Enrich Your Faith: Read Dr. Stanley's monthly letter at intouch.org/fph.

