

New York! New York!!!

New York has been a time for me to grow closer to hardship, frustration and being unconvinced while at the same time learning, making new friendships, adapting and overcoming. As in most situations, life in New York has been a mixed bag of feelings, emotions, and opportunities. I have been tired to the point of falling asleep while sitting up, moved to the point of tears while gazing on the Statue of Liberty, and nervous at riding on subways for the first time. I will leave New York better equipped for the mission field and would not trade the experience I have had this month.

As I reflect on the month that I had here in New York I need to start the story about a month before I arrived in the “Big Apple”. We had just finished packing all of our things into two storage units and moved out of our house and into a friend’s house on the lake. Things seemed to be so up in the air and I never thought life could hand out a greater feeling of being in a state of limbo. I was wrong. We now would take on the preliminaries of New York. It started with many calls to our coach and then finally with Peter Beck. I was stressed about two things and nobody was giving me the answers that I wanted. The first was adequate housing and the second was transportation the night of our arrival into the city. There were times in that month that I was scared, angry, confused, and unsure. As I usually do, in the beginning I tried to take it on by myself. This led me to greater frustration, fear, and anger. At times I was out of control inside and trying to appear different towards my family and friends. I had to lay this at the feet of Jesus. It is always amazing to me that this is often the last place that I turn to and not the first. Upon turning this over, it was not long before Peter gave us information about our house and Ascension Church told us that they would be coming to get us at the train station. Both of my two big issues were handled. Now, on to New York. All was well.

We decided to take Amtrak to New York to save a few dollars. It was a long trip and we arrived at Penn Station weary travelers. We had a total of thirty-four bags and no idea of what we needed to do. Native New Yorkers on the train set us up with a Red Cap to get us to the street and loaded into the two cars that came from Ascension Church to help us get to our new home. Stress was again on the rise! It was being felt by Sarah and I and in the children. Miriam became so worked up it caused her to vomit in the car on the way to Queens. We did arrive about midnight and after unloading bags I whisked away to get some groceries for the next morning. That is when

my two oldest children hit melt down. Tears were plentiful and the frustrations were welling up. We made it through and things had improved by the following morning. However, it did allow me to realize my children could and would face stress. They seemed to be displaying it in different ways and I needed to make note. I would find out later about some of the other children and the way they dealt with stress. For example Rebekah will suddenly become very tired. This can happen in a matter of moments. As I reflect on this part of the training I realize what a gift it is to know what some of the stress trigger points are and how they manifest in the different children. This valuable tool will allow Sarah and I to keep the heartbeat of the children in check. We now know what the signs are. If we left with nothing else, New York would have been worth it.

However, we would get a whole lot more. The next couple of weeks would be the most difficult for us as a family, and presented us with the most amount of take aways from our time. The first of these was language learning. We now know how important it is to know the language and how much our hearts desire this. I was shocked at how much I could remember about a language and how quickly I could learn it if I put the time and effort into it. As I sit and write this paper today I can still recall Jet and Arabic. I am encouraged and challenged at the same time and know with hard work and perseverance I will learn Spanish. I was also to find a new relationship with our Arabic language helper and enjoyed seeing and talking to him when he picked his children up from VBS. I will continue to pray for him and his salvation.

During this time of language learning things were rolling outside of the classroom. We had been assigned to the Energizer Bunny! (This is the name that was lovingly given to the pastor's wife of Ascension Church.) Roseanne was very organized and was looking for a great deal of work form us. I did not feel like I had the energy to give to her but buckled down and mustered it up. After all this was my job and like every job that I have ever held you do what you need to do to be successful. Well, I soon realized I was dealing with this in a way that I should not. Sarah was doing what she did best which is to keep the pulse of the children and know what they could and could not handle. I was treating it like work and became very frustrated when deadlines were not being kept and punctuality was not happening. It all hit the fan one Saturday morning. The children could no longer keep up the pace. Sarah knew this and had already started to relax the momentum. I on the other hand was holding my "employees" responsible for any delays. Boy was this a slap in the face! I was so busy with the ministry and getting the job done that I was considering my family as employees and not taking

the time to stop and evaluate where we were at as a family. Thank God for my wife. This broke out into an argument and tension between the two of us. Since we both deal with conflict in the same way, to win, the battle was fierce. After several hours of reflecting on the morning I realized I was in the wrong. I was treating my family as employees. Many years of managing large sales teams was playing into the picture. My three year old was just as liable. Why? God is gracious and so is my wife. I took time to explain why I was feeling the way I did and asking God to change my heart. My family is different then a sales team and missions is different from a sales organization. I wanted the job to get done and Sarah wanted to hold the family together. How quickly I traded the family for the job. This is an area that I will have to keep in check, and one that I would not have considered if pre-field training had not been there.

VBS went off pretty well. It was a relief to be done with it and I knew that things would begin to slow down a bit. They did but the stress level began to rise again. What was this all about? Well, Sarah and I realized how far behind we were in the work that had been assigned. We had survived the VBS and now were reeling in angst over the assignments. After all that is the main reason that we are here? Ethnographies, Cultural Interviews, Journaling, Learning Contracts, five page papers, presentations, shipping arrangements, field issues, and calls from our friends telling us of a job loss, how could we get all of this done? We were unsure. This time I decided to leave it in God's hands. If there was one thing that I had been learning over and over (sometimes it was a baseball bat to the head) it was to lay this at the foot of the cross. Amazingly, all the things that seemed to be pressing down on us have been accomplished. The writing of this is the last thing hanging over our heads. God is good and has given us what we need to survive and finish the course.

I am able to leave New York with a different take on missions. The first of these is that it will not be a cakewalk. I will encounter many obstacles. Life will not be a bed of roses. In fact it will be more difficult than ever before. However, God has shown me that He is sufficient. We can try to do it in our own strength and will most likely fail, or we can place it into his loving arms. It is good to face the trial and see where you go. I know now that my own strength is the wrong place, and I will hopefully enter Belize with a different understanding of where my strength lies.