

# Word on the Street

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## Anna's Thoughts: The Picture in my Mind's Eye

When we started this endeavor, we had an idealized picture of what the journey and the outcomes would be. Two years into our ministry here in New York, there are aspects of our lives that we pictured and aspects that we did not.

My picture of a thriving urban ministry was anchored with healthy cross-cultural relationships that honor God and serve as a witness to Christ. We are beginning to see evidence of that.

I wanted to have **relationships with the teen girls** that I met through our church's ministries that were comfortable enough that they would simply come by the apartment and hang out after school. Lately, that has happened. The girls want to go with Thomas and I to the grocery, help me bake a pie for our pastor's birthday, or simply hang out. I no longer have to wrack my brain figuring out "activities" to invite them to. All I have to do is be faithful to spend intentional time with them and trust God to open up conversations about what it means to live a life of faith.



I see growth in my **relationships with women in the church**, too. It's such a blessing to be invited to stop by their homes for a cup of coffee and to learn from their experiences as mothers. On the playground, I'm seeing **relationships with moms and child care providers** deepen. I am thankful for how God is enabling us to share each other's lives despite very different backgrounds and lifestyles.

I also see growth in our ability to have candid and sometimes hard conversations with **folks from church**. I trust that these conversations are serving to deepen our relationships and to "sharpen" one another as the Lord calls us to do. Increasingly, Matt and I are sharing our struggles with others in the church, and they are sharing their burdens with us as well.

On the **church and community development** side of ministry, things are slowly but surely moving along. I recently completed a strategic plan and budget to re-launch our church with our pastor. I believe the lessons that I am learning through this process will uniquely equip me to help other under-resourced churches when time permits in the coming years.

One significant way that our picture has changed in recent months is *who* is in the picture. As many of you know, we started this journey in Crown Heights at a church where there were several young couples from similar walks of life. In recent months, for various reasons, each of those couples has left the church. It has been a sad loss for us that we are still processing through. Practically, this means that our church has lost valuable leaders and financial resources at a time when the church is also dealing with a pre-existing but unexpected financial problem. **We value your prayers** regarding this.

Through all of this, I am constantly reminded of a beautiful and encouraging passage from Philippians that reminds me that there is infinitely more to be thankful for than there is to worry about. These words give me strength each day and remind me that God is painting this picture and to trust His artistry:

“Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again – rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. Do not worry about anything: instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”

## Matt: Needing Your Prayers

It is a little awkward writing something so personal in a newsletter and at the same time having to squeeze something significant into a few paragraphs. At the same time, I think it's good for you all to know what's going on with us and it also allows me to **ask for prayer**, which I really need.

The past few months have been the toughest months of my life. Since late spring, I've been suffering from depression. It's not something I have dealt with before, so it seemingly came out of nowhere. In early summer, I began to realize that I hadn't been myself in quite a while, but I couldn't put my finger on what was wrong. As things began to get worse, I went to the doctor to see if there was anything physically wrong with me. The doctor suggested that I go into counseling, and after several appointments it was clear that I was suffering from depression.

I'm going to be alright. That's one thing that I'm sure of, and I feel that God has given me real hope in knowing that there's going to be an end to this. It's not severe, and I'm thankful for that. I'm able to get on in life, although I'm definitely not at full capacity. I think the best way to describe it is that I feel like I'm at 60-70% of my normal capacity in all areas of my life. Physically, I don't have a ton of energy. Mentally, it's hard to concentrate, do much thinking, remember things, etc. Emotionally, it's a roller coaster where I have better days and worse days. It's hard for me to get excited about anything, and I feel like it's hard to experience simply having fun the way that I usually do. To be frank, it really stinks. It's like some monster took away myself from me and is holding my old self ransom. I can't wait for this depression to go away.

I feel like I'm taking the right steps to see that happen. I can't say if it's going to be a few more months or longer, but I do know that I will get better. If anything, I've learned to cope in the midst of depression over the past few months, and that has made it more bearable. I've come to realize that I only have a portion of the capacity that I usually have for anything from being a good missionary, to being a good church member, to being a good husband, father, and friend. Instead of feeling guilty about letting people down, I've come to accept that this is the situation I'm in, I didn't bring it upon myself, and that it doesn't do any good to be depressed about being depressed. It's bad enough to be suffering from depression, and it's not going to help me one bit to feel guilty about it. That's been the most helpful realization I've had.

So I'm pushing forward, with God's help. Thankfully, it hasn't been hard to seek God during this. I think He's teaching me some things that will hopefully benefit me not just now, but in my walk with the Lord in the future as well. As hard as it is sometimes to keep moving forward, as opposed to just sitting and doing nothing, I'm trudging ahead, step by step. **I want to ask for you prayers and patience as I make my way through this depression.** So let me praise God. He loves you and I both so very greatly. There is much to praise his name for.

*Thank you for your prayers and partnership. We couldn't do this without you!*

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