

January 2012

Relief Bus Ministry Update

2012 is off to a great start! The weather has been amazing (for the most part!) and God is already doing big things at The Relief Bus this year. It's such a privilege to see God working in such big ways through such ordinary people like me. There are many days when I can only step back and say, wow, how great is it that my job is to love people and show them God's love and compassion! I can't believe it's been 4 months already since I moved out here; it feels like a day and a lifetime all at once! I am so thankful for all of the people that God has brought into my life to help me learn and grow as I strive to serve Him more each day. And I'm thankful for all of you that have helped make this possible through your prayers and financial support!



Above: We celebrated Angel's birthday with cake in Harlem!

Left: Zack shovels snow from the top of the Relief Bus during a snowstorm.

Right: Billy jumped in to help out in the kitchen when we needed help!

Sleepovers and a birth certificate

In addition to my normal office work and outreach on the bus this month, I spent some time helping my friend Megan get a copy of her birth certificate. For you and me, this would be a simple, fairly painless process. When you've had everything stolen, have no bank account or credit card, and no means of transportation, however, it is not so easy. Helping Megan was a very frustrating, though humbling process for me. She needed to have her birth certificate in order to keep her welfare case open - she had 10 days to get it or be kicked out of her shelter. Our first plan of action was to help her order it online. Sounds easy, but certainly isn't! Between her lack of acceptable ID and the fact that it would take weeks to process the request, ordering online was out. So what now? The only other option was to get the birth certificate in person. Because Megan didn't have the "proper" ID required by the state of New Jersey (where she was born), she gave me a notarized letter authorizing me to get a copy of her birth certificate for her. So, last Thursday we brought Megan back to New Jersey on the bus with us, had a sleepover at the Relief Base, and on Friday morning she and I jumped in a van and drove about an hour south to the town where she was born. God was faithful and we were able to get the certified copy she needed with no hassles! It was good to spend the time with Megan outside of our normal interactions at the bus, as well as getting to experience a little bit of her background. I pray that this not only helps Megan with her welfare case, but also shows her God's faithfulness and builds her trust in God and the great love and care He has for her!

What is true love?

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ~ 1 John 3:16 (NIV)

What is true love? Not head over heels, sappy romance love; I mean true, God-driven love for others. According to this verse from 1 John, it is laying down our lives for others. But what does that mean? For the longest time I read that verse literally. I thought it meant I should literally die for my brothers and sisters. In the 4 months that I've spent working at The Relief Bus, I've come to see that it is so much more than that. It's not every day that I come to a situation where I would be called to literally lay down my life. But every day I can make the choice to lay down my life by putting myself and my fleshly desires aside and serving those around me. Looking at this verse in a little more context, it goes on to say in verses 17 and 18: *If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*



Putting the love of God into action in Harlem.

The Message version puts it this way:

This is how we've come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed his life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not just be out for ourselves. If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God's love? It disappears. And you made it disappear. My dear children, let's not just talk about love; let's practice real love. This is the only way we'll know we're living truly, living in God's reality.

Living sacrificially is not just a one time act where you serve someone to feel better about yourself. Isaiah 58:10 talks about *spending yourself* in behalf of the hungry. It's a repeated act of sacrifice. It doesn't always have to be a big act. You don't have to become a missionary to live sacrificially for others. Sometimes it's simply a smile, a visit, a listening ear, a word of advice that can make all the difference in someone's life. The question is, are you willing to take your eyes off yourself long enough to see the need in others?

True love is laying yourself aside each day to serve those around you. It's work. It's tiring. Sometimes it hurts. But it's always worth it. This love is about more than just giving away some food or clothes. It's about getting down into the muddy mess that the people we meet every day find themselves in and meeting them there with a helping hand. After all, that's what Jesus did for us when He came to earth and died on the cross. It's the least we can do for others.

Prayer Requests

Prayer is a major part of what we do at The Relief Bus. Your prayers are greatly appreciated, for me and for the ministry as a whole. The following are specific requests for the upcoming weeks:

- *Don't Walk By*: each Saturday night in February volunteers will walk the streets of Manhattan offering the homeless the chance for a hot meal, clothing, medical care and the possibility of being connected to a shelter, rehab, etc.
- *Health*: Nearly everyone at The Relief Bus has been battling some form of illness as we begin this new year.

For weekly updates and to find out how you can partner with me in this ministry, visit my website at katiemorrisurbanmissionary.weebly.com! You can also follow me on my Facebook page, Katie Morris: Urban Missionary on The Relief Bus, and on Twitter, @katiere reliefbus

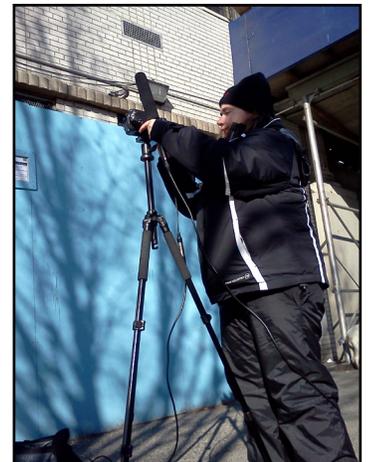


Photo: Shooting video on location in the Bronx.