

Greetings!

This month, I want to use my brief communication with you to focus in on one aspect of my work here in Miami. I have a broad, open-ended job with numerous responsibilities and even more acronyms. However, one day each week, I know that I go down to Florida City (beyond Miami proper), I tutor elementary-age children, and afterward I work with a woman who is learning to read and speak English. I relish this time as a break from the office and a chance to see urban ministry in practice; a time to sit with people at round tables and be myself, with no agenda beyond doing what I can to love and help them in that moment.

This past Wednesday as kids signed into their after school program, Dieuson asked which adult he would work with during homework time. When he figured out it was me, his face lit up. I had only worked with him one other time, and I was not easy on him. However, in addition to making Dieuson attempt the math homework that he tried to hide, I had also firmly defended him from two boys who mocked him for having to repeat 3rd grade. Instead of looking shattered as they taunted him the second day, Dieuson shot them a rebellious look and leaned into his math homework, which was hard. But I prodded and challenged and joked and explained and refused to give up. A few times, as we slogged through trying to understand the formula and method for calculating volume, he slouched in his chair and shook his head at me. "Miss, this is taking too long. Don't worry about it." Or, "It isn't worth it."

Fortunately, I'm stubborn. "I'm not giving up, and it IS worth it," I insisted, as I created a rectangular prism made up of peanut-butter cracker snack packets. (Each cracker represented one cubic unit.) Something clicked, and even though he has trouble multiplying, Dieuson finished his math homework. He also did his reading assignment.

At the time, I was pleased. I enjoyed the rush of figuring out what wasn't clicking for Dieuson and what obscured the concept of volume for him. I loved that simply pushing him and believing in him yielded positive results immediately. Later, I realized that for all my own tenacity and stubbornness, I still have quite a bit in common with Dieuson. Sometimes, trying to settle into Miami, my workplace, and my house, I've wanted to slouch and whine impatiently. I want so badly for it to *work*, for it to fit and make sense in every moment that I'm here. Yet, in response, if I wait a moment, I hear the whisper, "It IS worth it."

When I miss the 42 bus and have to take the 11 to the 27 instead, I remember that it's worth it to see the small, severely handicapped boy who grins into his mom's face as she whispers to him and kisses his nose. After I wander down streets looking for an address, it's worth it to talk to a youth pastor who wants to do new things with his community, like hosting a block party. When I'm not sure how I fit into South Florida Urban Ministries, it's worth it to find that there are people thinking powerful, innovative, convicting thoughts about how churches can partner to empower their communities. If I believe it's worth it,

many doors are open for me to step into those moments, those lives, those communities.

I close by asking you to please join me in praying that my life would model that of the Thessalonians whom the apostle Paul commends so highly: "We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." At its essence, that is what I long for, and I'm honored you're seeking it with me. Thanks always for your love, prayers, and support!

Shalom,
Laura

Picture time!---

Crandon Pk.- I finally went to the beach last weekend!

Piano- I'm learning how to play piano!

Patio- don't we have a cool yard and neighborhood?

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