

Dear Friends,

Where to begin an update on the last 16 months I have no idea. Many of you may have followed along with my newsletters, and even still, that is just a speck of the grand picture God is painting of our community and of my very own heart. I really mean it when I tell you that it is a joy to share about these things because through sharing, I can look back along with you at the endless works of God; this is joy.

Looking back, my mind is flooded by experiences of joy and pain, success and failure, plenty and want. Finding the beauty in it all has been a challenge, yet this time has been more fulfilling than I could have expected or hoped. God's grace has abounded in my own personal life, in my relationships, and in my community. His faithfulness has proved true over and over. His love has defeated death, even in the darkest places of my heart and the hearts of many whom I have come to know. There is never a short supply of reasons to praise and worship Him!

As a full-time staff member at Agape Development Ministries, I have been involved with various programs for children, youth, young adults, and the greater community by serving as mentor, teacher, coach, neighbor, facilitator, organizer. The entire staff lives in the Greater Third Ward, a large area of Houston where many suffer from poverty, abuse, illness, and powerlessness. I have lived in Agape's target neighborhood for 16 months. As residents in the community, the Agape staff is learning to focus on building relationships with neighbors based on mutual brokenness and mutual need for Christ and for one another. Humble surrender is essential and is where transformation can take place in our hearts. This is also the greatest challenge and requires constant dying to self. Please pray for me, for our staff, and for the individuals in our community as we embrace this challenge.

I am still raising more monthly support and asking folks to become partners in the ministry by committing to a monthly amount. By January 2012, I need to have my full-time salary raised in monthly support so that I can continue as a full-time staff member next year. Working full-time with Agape, I hope to continue serving in programs and participate in Agape's own development process, as we seek to understand and act in accordance with God's purpose for this community. I will also continue to live in the

community and build relationships with my neighbors. In the Spirit's power, I commit to *give and receive* the love and light of Christ through these relationships. I feel my personal calling is to be *available*, particularly to women and girls, as an empty vessel to be used as God desires. Why in this particular Third Ward neighborhood, only God knows, but I wouldn't want to be anywhere else right now. All that to say, I would love to have you be a part of whatever joys and hardships come with this calling. It is really special to live by the prayers and support of loved ones committed to His Kingdom.

As of November 1, I need about \$800 in monthly commitments to support a full-time salary. I currently have about \$1200 in monthly support given by 27 families and individuals, along with numerous one-time gifts from dozens of people. I am praying for 15 additional supporters to give \$25, \$50, \$75, or \$100 per month. We desire every aspect of Agape Development Ministries to be founded on sincere relationships, including our fundraising. The relationship we have with each of our supporters as we connect to the individuals in this community brings about the unity and reconciliation that we believe is God's desire. Would you please pray about becoming a partner and investor in the work God is doing here in Houston's Third Ward by making a financial commitment?

Please take me seriously that I need your prayers as much as I need your financial support. I truly believe in the power of prayer – this is one of the greatest resources we have been given. Part of my job will be to let you know for who and what you can pray, and I would ask that you also bear the burden to pray in faith and expectation.

Thank you all for the many ways that you have supported me in my life journey and specifically in these last 16 months. My heart has been changed by experiencing the grace and mercy God has bestowed upon me in this place. I am glad to remember you all in my prayers. *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

In Him,

Emily