

# Faith4Living - Early History

by [Tom Kiser](#)

*'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' - Matthew 5:14-16*

The following article details how God called our family to leave our rural, pastorate in Western Pennsylvania and begin a ministry of spreading the message of Purifying Grace in New York City.

Many cities are built on a hill or series of hills. New York City is not noted for its hills but for its Port. The greatest numbers of visitors and immigrants to the United States have come through this great and scenic harbor. New York City is a missionary's paradise. There are not many places in the world where you can meet and talk with people from Russia, China, Taiwan, Japan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Australia, India, Afghanistan, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Israel, Turkey, Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Greece, Albania, Italy, Sicily, Finland, Norway, France, Spain, Ireland, England, Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guyana, Trinidad, Grenada, Barbados, Antigua, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba, Panama, Guatemala, Mexico. This is our constant privilege. I recorded meeting people from every country listed above in our first two years here.

Imagine talking with and sharing the gospel with Muslims, Black Militants, Hindus, Moonies, Satanists, Mormons, Buddhists, Jehovah Witness's, Jews, Taoists. Living here in New York City has provided us with this opportunity also.

It was these vast numbers of ethnically diverse people that fueled my great excitement as I considered the possibility of beginning an urban ministry in NYC. I wanted to spread the clear message of God's Victorious Grace where it is seldom heard. Since being here these 13 years we have realized many times the ones we minister to today may carry this message to others around the world. Urban ministry was not entirely new to me. I was involved with the city ministries at God's Bible School in Cincinnati, Ohio. I had chosen GBS for my ministry training because of their urban ministry opportunities. However I did not go directly to New York City after graduation. God led us to pastor a small church in rural Pennsylvania. The "us", at that time, included my wife, Faith and our first son, Seth.

We served 7 years in this pastorate and the church was united behind us. We enjoyed the country setting and the kind hearted people we ministered to. However in our 7<sup>th</sup> year

there I began to feel a burden for reaching people who had never heard the message of salvation. In the spring of 1989, I made a trip to New York City. I did not know the layout of the city or any ministry there. I had, though, a growing conviction that it was likely that God was calling us to go there.

I was amazed that on this first trip to New York City I was offered a free place to stay and use as an office in Manhattan. In God's Providence an old lady on the street directed me to speak to an officer at the the Salvation Army located on 14th Street in Manhattan. I shared my burden for starting a ministry in the city with this man. He was very interested and directed me to speak to the Lieutenant at the Salvation Army Corp on 52nd Street. To my surprise the Officer in charge offered me the use of a storage room in their basement. Except for cleaning out the junk and refinishing the room it was rent-free. New York is the earth's center of finance, Media, Publishing and Fashion. Commercial Space there in Midtown Manhattan was known to rent for \$200 a month, per square foot. People who live in this "Neighborhood" have the highest per capita income in the USA. I had barely enough to keep the car running. I wasn't even looking for a place to stay and God had thrown open the door to a free office and sleeping quarters to start our ministry from.

As we sought for God's will we realized there were many great logistical considerations to overcome to make such a radical move possible. How do we start? Where will our family live? How will we pay the bills?

I felt lead to go first to my conference council with my desire to begin a work in New York City. I am an ordained Minister with the Pilgrim Holiness Church of New York Inc. While I had the encouragement and blessing of the conference council it was clear that there were not finances to support a work such as this. This meant that we would be real pioneers and pioneering is a lot of real hard and sometimes strange work.

In the late summer of 1989 we left our home of 7 years in Pennsylvania and moved our family to upstate New York to be near family and friends while I prepared the way for them into the city. I started by working 2 days a week delivering rats and mice to various labs in the Northeast United States. That left 5 days to split between our goals in New York City and being a husband to my wife and a dad to our 2 sons and 2 daughters.

After delivering rats for 5 months, I left the rat job and joined the New York City "rat race." I became a messenger delivering packages all over the metro area. It became a crash course on the city. I learned the way to get from here to there. I learned where to park and where not to park. That part of my training enriched the city quite a few times. Parking tickets are serious business in New York. I learned the basic distribution of ethnic groups in the five boroughs and about the racial tensions. I learned were the gays congregated. I learned the safe times to be in certain areas and what times required extra caution. I have learned no place is completely safe. I had my personal laptop stolen from my office at work. I know first hand the fatigue of long commutes on mass transit.

I learned the pressures of working and losing jobs. I left the delivery job to work in a hotel in their sales department. Business is brutal in New York and our company downsized and I was left with good references but no job. I did temporary work until I networked to a position in another hotel. This is a thumb nail sketch of what it means to

be a resident of New York. These hardships have been a great school. I arrived in New York City with Pastoral Experience. In God's wonderful providence I now know the stresses and responsibilities of the business world.

On Tuesday, March 18th 2003 my wife and I were crying out to God about our ministry needs. The demands on us had grown too great to continue working at the hotel 5 days each week to support our ministry. Faced with great opportunities to touch peoples lives but not having sufficient funds coming in to support us full-time in the ministry had brought us to a time of desperate prayer and seeking God's face. We knew we must have some answers that only God could provide. I cried out to God: "Lord, you have to provide for us in our great need, it's your job." We spent time thanking God for his provision and acknowledged that we knew He was making all things work together for our good. The following day my boss at the New York Palace Hotel told me the hotel was doing away with my position. This was a wonderful answer to prayer because we knew we couldn't carry on with our ministry while carrying the load of full-time secular work. This also has challenged us to look to the Lord for our daily bread in a way we have never had to before. Our rent is \$1200 a month, food costs us about \$1000 a month for our family of 10 and our ministry up to this time has provided us with only about \$50 a week.

New York City is a stressful, expensive place to live. Some will consider this as the the down side of living in the city. But the difficulties are also great blessings! Because life is tough in the city people are hungry for answers. There are a multitude of people here who have a real commitment to Jesus Christ. It is comparatively easy to talk about spiritual things to people in this city. The opportunities to share the Gospel and disciple believers are very many.

We started this summary of our New York adventure with a Bible quotation from Matthew 5. "A city that is set on a hill can not be hid." Neither can we hide a family with 8 children. This verse finishes by saying to "let your light shine so that people will see your light and be drawn to God."

Our work here has often been shaped quite naturally around our family. As other missionaries have found, children are a major drawing attraction to people. Our first challenge was to show an alternative way of raising children. We did this by home schooling our children and by teaching and expecting characterized behavior from each of our children. This caused some in our neighborhood to ask how to raise their children. We began a Parenting Ministry using material called "Growing Kids God's Way." This 18-week program has been a benefit to those who come and has given us greater exposure in our community.

The behavior of our children brought a man in our community to offer his newly remodeled home to us. He had remodeled his home for himself. Circumstances forced him to move his family from the city and he wanted to be careful in renting. The children had impressed him and he offered his home for a rate far less than the market. We have been in this home for the past 8 years and our relationship with our landlord remains very cordial.

The home schooling of our children became another shaping aspect of our ministry. We are founding members of the "Kings Choice" home school support group for Brooklyn and have served on its steering committee since its inception. There have been numerous ways that we have been able to touch lives through our association with this group. It is a our great joy to network with so many people in New York who call on God and believe in Jesus as their Savior. Through this we are continually given opportunities to minister to families.

Our children are an important part of our ministry team. Early in our time here we began hosting groups from different Bible Schools who come to New York for weekend mission work and cross-cultural exposure. These groups of young people pass out tracts and witness to multicultural people in various parts of this city. These young people get a taste of urban ministry. We have also been able to host some students for internships as mission majors.

Time after time our children give up beds and room to allow others to come. They clean and rearrange our limited space from church room to bedroom to play room to storeroom to schoolroom. We have learned to get the most mileage from every inch of space we have. I tell you this because it might seem as if our children would want to be anywhere but here in New York City. But, this is not the case. Our oldest boys are planning and schooling to be servants for Jesus in this ministry. Our girls are also interested in helping in various jobs.

During one session of parenting classes in our Living Room our children conducted a Character Class for the children of these parents in our multipurpose church room. They are dedicated members of our Mission Team. They witness, teach, pass out tracts, call people for prayer requests, set up accommodations for visitors and serve along side my wife and I. We thank God for His work in our children. It is a joy to see them continue to mature in their walk with Christ as they labor for Him here.

For details about Faith4Living Ministry click here: [About Faith4Living Ministry](#).