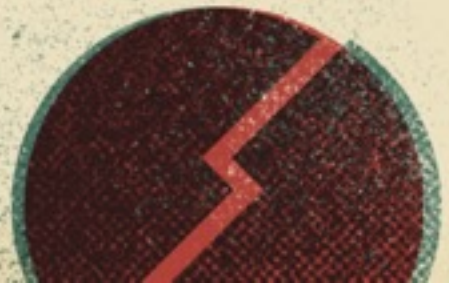


CULTIVATE THE ROMANCE



A BIGGER PICTURE

CULTIVATE THE ROMANCE



Cultivate the Romance
“Bigger”
January 24, 2016
Courage Church, Detroit, MI

So today is week four of our “Cultivate the Romance” series. This is the second to last week of the series, and one that as I was studying, my objective was to, to the best of my ability, answer this question:

“Where is Courage Church going in 2016?”

And as I was thinking about that, I realized that there is an even more important question to ask:

“Where is Courage Church going in the next five years?”

Because if we don't see a bigger picture of what we believe God is trying to do in our midst, then we will have no idea what the first step is toward that. Or the second step. Or the third or fourth step.

and we will never take any steps.

So We started with the big picture... which may to many of you seem like the little picture because it seems so simple. and you have heard this before.

The ministry of reconciliation.

Reconciling people back to God.

But that mission leaves a lot of questions... like how?

How do you cultivate a romance that reconciles people back to God, when all people are different? When socio economic divide our city... when some people love productions and others love simplicity. When some people use smart phones and others want us to print a paper bulletin...

When some people come to church every week and others you can't get there if you paid them.

I just keep coming back to Christ. I want to show as many people Jesus as we can and we want to create an environment where everyone is welcome.

Galatians says (Galatians 3:28) "In Christ we are neither Jew nor Gentile, slave or free, male or female. We are all one."

and that is what we are seeking to create. A place where people are all one, because we are all *reconciled* to Jesus and at the end of the day that is what matters.

and from there have been fasting and praying about what the first steps are to a picture like that. Because I do believe that God wants to see some action from us this year. Justin came up to me this week and he said, "Pastor Jacob the word that I believe God gave me for my life this year is action."

and I told him, "I couldn't agree more!"

And the reason that I am thinking so big for the action that we are going to take in 2016 is this:

The bible tells us that God will give more than you can imagine. Ephesians 3:20 says "God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask, seek, and even imagine." - the amount of more can not be measured!

So I am trying my hardest to dream as big as possible for the city of Detroit and the role that Courage Church will have the honor of playing in it... knowing that anything that I *can* dream... God can do bigger!

So lets turn to the word of God, as we look today at why we are going where we are going this year. and where that why will lead us to.

I am going to take you back again to the verse I ended with three weeks ago. You can open your bibles to Isaiah 9:2

Isaiah 9:2

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

We are calling today's message "A Bigger Picture"

Lets Pray.

You know it is strange to me that God would keep bringing me back to this verse in Isaiah because like I told you, it tends to be used at Christmastime to paint a picture of the birth of Jesus. But when Jesus was born, so was hope.

And when Jesus gave us the great commission, he sent a helper who was with us who could help *us* be that hope.

Who could help us be that light shining on the land of deep darkness.

Jesus did not just put us here so we could sit like bumps on a log and wait to die along with our city. No, he gave us an assignment. A very clear assignment.

2 Corinthians 5 says that you have been given the ministry of reconciliation.

Now go and reconcile people back to God. Go cultivate a romance between those who are apart from God, and God. Bridge gaps for people. Live love for people. Show people Jesus.

But what does that even look like here?

God lead me to this verse this week:

Proverbs 31:8-9 says "Open your mouth for the mute,
for the rights of all who are destitute.

9 Open your mouth, judge righteously,

defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Speak up for the ones who can not speak up for themselves.

Speak up for the rights of those who live every day without the basic necessities of life.

Defend the rights of the poor and the needy.

There is something about that last line. Defend the *rights*. Another version says “plead the cause...”

The bible makes it very clear: Something that is supposed to be done, is not being done in society...

it is a right...

it is a cause...

it is how it should be, and its not being done... and so God is calling on his people to pick up the pieces, to make up for all the times that injustice played its dirty hand in the lives of those who are marginalized.

That sounds to me like a heck of a lot more than just a handout.

It sounds to me like a lot more than a sandwich. Maybe it starts with a sandwich. Maybe your foot in the door is a sandwich or a dollar or a coffee. But at some point we have to move beyond the social justice anyone could manage to suffer through in order to pat ourselves on the back...

and to beginning pleading the cause of those who literally need their lives to change completely from where they are now, to where God desires for them to be.

How do you cultivate a romance for a person who doesn't have a home?

All they want is a warm bed to sleep in.

Here is a picture of my wedding.

I was riding with Matt Brown and we were talking about Joy to the D... about how in the Joy to the D video I quoted Andy Stanley, and said "lets do for a FEW what we wish that we could do for everyone." and he was talking about how he wants to see the homeless ministry really take on that approach more than ever in 2016. Which I love.

And he started talking to me about his friend Butch. and about how what started with him just going out on day on his lunch break and feeding people, and starting conversations and trying to meet needs actually developed into a real friendship. And as I listened to him I actually felt a little guilty because I didn't realize what is going on out there... I have been out with them and I know that they talk to people, but most of the time when I think about that ministry all I think about are sandwiches.

But Matt looked at me and said, "Jacob, Butch is one of my best friends."

"If he is still around when I get married, there is no doubt, he will be stand in my wedding."

"That guy is going to be in my wedding."

I am not kidding. I almost started crying. I mean, this dude loves people. This is what compassion looked like for Matt Brown:

He met a tangible need.

He gave real time getting to know someone.

And then he let his heart be set on fire for that person.

It went far beyond the weird "rush" you may get in a moment from "helping someone." - I call it a "ministry high" - they are the things that make you feel good about yourself... but they fade.

I never did drugs, but I lost enough friends to them to know that in that world, the things that were once exciting become less and less exciting, and so eventually you need to kick it up with something that is at another level.

and people do that in ministry... and when one thing doesn't make them feel good anymore because it has become mundane then the feeling fades and so does the passion, and they stop doing it and look for something else that will fulfill their need to feel important.

its an ego boost.

But Matt Brown doesn't help people because it feeds his ego.

He gives his heart to people. Because that is how you cultivate a relationship. He literally lets himself enter a relationship that after not long, HE NEEDS, JUST AS MUCH AS BUTCH NEEDS.

Every person who stood in my wedding I would do anything for at any time if I could.

These are the closest friends that I have in all of the world and for each one of them, when I asked them if they would stand up in my wedding and support me on the biggest day of my entire life I was saying to them that they have a place in my heart that is so incredibly special that I want them next to me when everything about my whole world changes.

I believe that when Matt Brown spends time with Butch and some of his other friends, he is cultivating a romance with Jesus in his own life just as much as he is helping them cultivate it in theirs.

Dream Journals

So we gave you guys dream journals two weeks ago, and gave you assignments each week. And I am going to share with you a little from my journal about what I believe God has put in Dawn and I's hearts for our church this year.

So we said this as we did our dream journals. We said:

What you want will tell you what to work for.

and we asked you guys to write down ten things that you want, and for each one in your journals, to cut out pictures and try and visualize it some. And I explained this a little at Equip a couple of weeks ago, but this is not about “naming it and claiming it” - Dream Journals are NOT magic. It is not like just because you put something on that paper that it magically is going to happen that way.

But it does several things. One of them, is it helps you begin planning a little toward your dreams. Once you put it on the paper, and you see it, you realize something...

God is big enough to do this.

And do you know how you know that? Because you are looking at how big God showed up for someone else... and the bible tells you that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35), if he can do it for someone, he can do it for you.

For example, I put in my dream journal this picture of a house. This particular house is five blocks from the church, and it is a two family flat that would be PERFECT for the discipleship based internship that we want to start this year. We could house the girls on one floor, and the guys on the other. Now, by putting this picture here, I am not saying that for sure this is the house we are going to get, in fact I think this exact one may have sold already... but what I am saying is this... God, you were big enough to give this house to the person who owns it now... and they want to sell it... and we want to do really great things with it...

You are big enough to give it to us. Or give us something that will work even better.

And if the house we end up with looks different from that one, that is fine. If it is on a different street, that is fine. If God says “rent an apartment the first year” and let me do big things through that, that is fine.

Remember, Ephesians 3:20, “God can do more than we even can imagine.”

So the more that we imagine, the more that he can do!

But it brings you life to see it.

Hababbuk 2:2-3 says:

Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so he may run who reads it.
For still the vision awaits its appointed time;
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.
If it seems slow, wait for it;
it will surely come; it will not delay.

Make it clear as day so that others can hear it, and they can run with it.
They can run to spread it. They can accomplish it together.

It is no secret that I want to someday start a Dream Center or something similar in Detroit. A hospital for broken people. Something like that, but I don't say a ton about it because its just such a big dream that feels so far away. The house that I put in my dream journal, I believe is the first step toward a ministry like that which I will explain more in a little while. But the more I do speak it, the more people begin to get it.

Yesterday Vil and Corinne sent me a picture message of this huge building and said "Future Dream Center?"

and I smiled so huge because I realize that people are starting to get it. I am not the only one who thinks we need to get extremely aggressive about helping the least of these and bringing hope to a broken city.

And it means more to me to see a picture of a building that someone else sees as a potential location for a dream that we are beginning to share... than it does to just write out "I want to have a Dream Center."

No. I want to have a God sized dream that our whole community shares in!

And that text helped me think bigger!

The bible says that it is the job of the church to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. (Ephesians 4:12)

and seeing others begin to get excited shows me that it has begun. It may be many years in the making... but it has begun.

We believe that God has given us the vision for where we should go but there is no way we can do any of this alone.

Think Bigger.

One thing that Dawn and I are going to start, even before we start our discipleship based internship program, is we are going to start a GROWTH TRACK here, that helps you guys grow and learn how to study the bible more closely and how to apply it more practically in your lives.

One of the objectives of a growth track is to answer the hard question, "where do I fit in all of this?"

We are going to utilize EQUIP on Thursdays... we are still going to take a good amount of time to pray but the first half of each service will be either a discipleship class where we go really deep into a passage or topic, and on other days we will offer the growth track that we are writing.

You will hear a ton more about that in the next couple of months because we have been working very hard on it already and we are excited.

But what we are doing here at the beginning of the year, is writing down where we believe God is taking us over the next several years... and then planning out tangible steps towards them. And a Growth track/discipleship intensive is tangible...

and a house is a slightly less tangible step but I believe it is achievable and that would change an incredible amount for our church.

But none of it can happen if we don't all share in it.

So the second thing we said was:

What you love will tell you what you were made for.

and we asked you guys to write down 100 things that you love.

And I did it.

I sat down and I wrote down 100 things that I love. Jesus is one of them. Coffee is one of them. My family is one of them. Music is one of them.

Discipleship is one of them. Reading is one of them. Community is one of them. “seeing others learn” is one of them.

I love that. I love when people learn. I love that I have the honor and opportunity to teach the bible. I feel like I am blessed with the greatest job on the planet and I absolutely love doing it.

And we have dreams that we can pull from that list that are so much bigger than us, like the concept Dawn shared with you last week about Crafted Courage and ideas similar to the Dream Center that we have no tangible way to achieve yet but we are writing them down now believing that God can do anything, while we create tangible steps towards the things that we can achieve.

Like the Growth track and the redirecting of EQUIP toward discipleship. Those are things we can do NOW, with what is in our hands.

but as I looked over the things that I love, almost all of them had to do, one way or another, with what I am doing and with what God is doing in me.

and there is nothing more affirming than the reality that you are walking in line with God’s will, especially when it lines up with your passion.

Then we said this:

What you are thankful for will tell you what you can see

This sounds weird. It sounded weird when we wrote it a couple of weeks ago when we were trying to outline where we are going with this series... and I told Dawn, "Great. I get that one..."

I barely even knew what it meant.

but hopefully it will make more sense to you after today.

Because here is the truth about this line. When we wrote it, we had something in mind, but then I experienced it, and I believe that it became something greater.

I was sitting in the sanctuary on Thursday listening to worship music over the speakers and I was literally just sitting here on the stage with my dream journal writing the 100 things that I love, and then I figured I should get ahead and do the 10 things I am thankful (which by the way is your assignment for this week) for so I began writing them... and I would write one, then pause and think for a little while, and then write another.

I don't often take time to think about what I am thankful for, and that is a problem... in fact it has been a road block I believe, in my dreams. And I know that more clearly after I began to write them.

Because even though I am thankful for just about everything, I had to really think hard, "What am I deeply thankful for."

and one of the things that I wrote down, it was #6 on my list... it says "Heat in the winter."

Normally, I would never think to put "heat" on my list. Especially if I only had ten slots to fill. They would all be the more "big" yet generic things like the first one on my list "The Grace of God."

But on Monday night, our house got very very cold. The thermostat was set to 68 but was only heating to 50. The heat was running, in fact it never stopped running. There was a flame, the fan was working... heat was coming out of the vent, but the house was not heating. and it got really really really cold.

I text Adam a 911 text and he came over right away, went into the crawl space and tried to fix it.

Now, our crawl space is nasty. I am guessing that they all are but this thing was so gross and he had to growl under basically the whole house to get to what he needed...

so we thought we had fixed it... but that night, it got even colder. We set the heat to 70, and it dropped into the 40s.

So Wednesday Adam came back over and went back into the crawl space, and out of a sense of guilt and obligation to hold the arms of the man who was braving the freezing gross crawl space for the sake of my family... this time I went with him down below so I could hand him tools as he needed them. So TOGETHER, we fixed the problem.

The problem was the cold air return, both on the side of the return AND on under the furnace, were completely disconnected. So the air was not circulating, so cold air from the crawl space was getting in the furnace and it was fighting to compete and so the furnace could not keep up.

Because it got very very very cold this week.

So Thursday, as I was writing the list of things I was thankful for, I had just come off of my first night all week of sleeping in a house that is actually heated properly.

and I was very thankful for that.

And the moment that I wrote that into my journal, do you know what I saw?

I saw my friend Nigel. Who doesn't even have a home to heat.

and I instantly remembered a call that I got from him in the middle of the night on a Saturday in October when he said to me,

"Pastor Jacob Its getting really cold out."

and I didn't have a solution at that time. And I don't really have a solution at this time either.

But as I think about how much that heat meant to me after not having it, I can't help but think about the people out there who just don't have it at all. And I wonder, "God, what can we do for people like that?"

People who want to turn their lives around... people who WANT to serve you? But they don't even have the basic necessities of life"

the moment that I realized what I was thankful for, I immediately saw a need.

and what it did in me was simple.

It caused me to think bigger.

"If this means so much to me, then how do we give it to everyone else?"

Not only that, but when you take the time to be thankful for something, you begin to see the way God is already moving in your life. You see what he has done... and its OK to want God to move in greater ways in your life.

So whatever you see... thank God knowing that it is grace. Then ask him for the grace to show you what you don't see.

Think bigger.

So that is what we want you to do this week in your dream journals... this is the last assignment.

"Write down ten things that you are truly thankful for."

It will do something amazing in your heart, and it will show you something about the way you see life.

So lets talk about the future. The tangible, the intangible. The possible. The impossible.

Dawn and I believe that there is a reason that why we left Michigan almost immediately after getting married, ventured to Los Angeles, and in an effort to do one thing... pursue careers in film and music, we ended up doing something very different. We ended up on the campus of this incredible place called the Dream Center. Dawn told you a little bit about that part of our story last week, and I am going to tell you more of it next week.

But what we know for sure is that there is a reason that God took us out from the leadership we were under in Lansing, took us to Los Angeles, moved us to New York City, before finally bringing us BACK under the same leadership that we started under.

Our leaders here are absolutely incredible, and they have taught us many things... but they don't know what it is like to live in a city like this, so there is "no hands" on way to train someone to do this. They gave us all of the spiritual training and mentorship we could ask for and they continue to do that... but I believe that we went on the journey that we did because it was, without a doubt, exactly what we needed to be able to stand on our own two feet here in Detroit.

And after all of that amazing journey... living in two of the greatest places imaginable, God really and truly did put Detroit on our hearts.

and I believe with all of my heart that if God can put Detroit on my heart, he can put it on other peoples hearts. In fact, I believe with 100% confidence that God is putting Detroit on peoples hearts. I believe that the prayer that Pastor Chilly and Pastor Kevin prayed almost exactly a year ago to this day when they said "God, put Detroit on someones heart" that prayer was not just for Dawn and I. It was not just for our family.

It was for a move of God that needs to happen here in our city and I believe that the prayer they prayed that day is still reaching out and tugging on the hearts of people who keep hearing Detroit in their hearts and just like Dawn and I, they have no idea what that means.

Well I am thinking bigger for Courage Church this year. and that is going to mean reaching out to some of those people and letting them know that God is moving here. So you should move here too.

Thats hard for me. You know that. So I made this graphic to do the hard work for me.

But I know that I can't do what God wants to do in this place on my own. Dawn and I have been growing and are constantly learning as we work together but even the two of us are not enough.

I believe that God is moving in some of you. That it is time to do more. Maybe you aren't all going to quite your jobs and I wouldn't want that for most of you... but God is moving in some of you letting you know that you are supposed to be a part of this bigger picture here in Detroit.

and as we begin to roll out our Growth track and our discipleship intensive, you will see more and more ways to do that, and really find where you fit... but the first thing we are doing, to let everyone be a part, is our first fruit offering. And we are going to talk about this as a principle in detail next week... but we are going to talk about its purpose in our church this week.

The First Fruit Offering

Throughout the bible, there are so many cases for generosity, in every circumstance of your life.

People who gave out of their abundance.

And people who had almost nothing and out of their lack they gave everything, like the widow in Mark 12:41-44... who came to the offering box and put in two small copper coins - essentially she gave one penny in the offering... but Jesus said that she gave more than everyone else in the room because they gave out of their abundance, but she put in everything that she had to live on.

She had almost nothing, so she gave everything, leaving herself with nothing.

Now Jesus didn't condemn the ones who gave out of abundance either, because those gifts matter too, but when it comes down to sacrifice, her's was greater.

But there is another principle in the bible that is talked about a lot less but I believe is one of the most powerful principles in the entire world when it comes to cultivating a heart that is truly generous.

And that is the principle of the first fruit. And again, we are going to spend the entire message next week studying this principle, and you are not going to want to miss it because when you understand it, it will change your life. It will change the way you view your money, and has the potential to break any hold that money may have over you. But its actually so much more than just a financial principle, though its easiest to relate it to money.

And here is the principle in a nutshell.

We know the tithe, the tithe gives 10% of what you have, whatever it is. The tithe is what sustains the church, what keeps it moving forward and allows us to meet the needs.

We know about offerings... they are acts of generosity that go above our tithe. and Some give offerings out of abundance. and Some give out of lack. When the widow put those two copper coins in the offering was not a tithe, it was an offering. It was much more than 10% of what she had, it was ALL she had.

But then we have first fruits. And the concept of the first fruit, in one line, would be this:

They gave out of their uncertainty.

Everyone always recommends, "You never do any type fund raiser at the beginning of the year... Everyone just came off of Christmas, nobody is thinking about end of the year write offs, etc."

“Its better to ask people when they know how their year went and what excess they have to be generous with.”

And next week I am going to build a case for you as to why it is so incredibly powerful to plant a seed in your uncertainty. To plant a seed not knowing what your year is actually going to look like.

So we are going to take an offering next week, beyond our tithe.

and that money will not go to pay my salary. it will not go to the churches utility bills...

it is going to go toward the vision of Courage Church.

It is your first chance to buy in.

I believe we need to raise around 65 thousand dollars this year to properly and effectively launch our discipleship program.

I plan on buying one property this year. God could change that, it may look different... he may say “rent apartments,” he may say “Buy a whole apartment complex” I don’t know exactly what the space will be yet, but i know that it is the first step.

And I know a lot of people may say, “I don’t want to give to start an internship program that I am not even going to go through.” Which first of all... all of you are welcome and invited to go through it and I will even figure out a way to get you some sort of a scholarship for it if you do want to. We will make it work.

But if you are thinking that, then you just don’t understand... yet... which is okay. I am going to work hard to explain this now and in the future.

This is the first step of a much bigger purpose. If we have a house to house interns, then we also have a place to host some short term mission teams in the summer when the internship is on break. We get calls all the time from churches who want to come and help us in Detroit, and this would allow us to facilitate them.

I told you guys already, I believe that God is putting Detroit on peoples hearts. And some of them will come and do this program, and others will come and be involved in different ways, but the simple and tangible reality is that if someone were to come tomorrow and say “I am moving from the East Coast or I am moving my family from the West Coast to come help you with the church...”

They would come and live at my house.

And I am totally fine with that, maybe that will happen at first... but we could do so much more if we had a place for people.

It would allow us to add staff to our church because even though we may not be able to offer them a paycheck we can offer room and board which for some, at least for a season, is enough if they feel called.

It would give us feet on the ground on a daily basis that can meet the needs not only of the church but of the community. We have talked about getting involved and starting some gardens in the community, and maybe a soccer field and other things like that down the road... they are great ideas, but this is the first step. Because while all of you are working your jobs in the market place we will have people continuing the work that you do, all throughout the week. It will turn us into a constant in this community. It would add a consistency to the relationships we are able to build in our homeless outreaches in a way that hopefully is a multiplication of the work that Matt and Emily are doing.

If we can take Matt's heart that we heard about earlier, and Emily has it too... and multiply it into 5 or 6 others who are able to do this every day, we are going to be able to make a really big difference.

Having a team readily available would equip us to move forward on things like gardens... it would help us take on more projects to help our neighbors. It would give Austin more consistency in the schools. They would help us begin new ministries, and add just an amazing element of consistency to everything. They would be out spreading the word about Courage Church and even more importantly, about Jesus.

Those who stay over the summers would be able to help lead mission trips with churches who just want to donate a week of their time to do something to make Detroit better. Detroit is getting better but it is still a mission field and we are still a mission church. And people want to be a part of it.

Beyond that, the program that we are going to start for the students will be highly discipleship based. We will give the students an opportunity to earn their ministry credentials, while learning in the most hands on way what its like to plant a church.

and I believe as the years go by we will send missionaries all over the world equipped to do the work of the ministry through this first tangible step in what I believe is God's dream for Courage Church.

That is where this years first fruit offering will go toward. To helping us start that program. We want to launch it in September.

And I believe that its one step, that will lead to another step. and another. Because it sets us up to practically meet real needs on a consistent basis.

I will end with this story.

We had to go to New York in June to film these weddings...we took the girls with us but we didn't tell them that we were going there. Their cousins live there and the girls have been missing them like crazy.

We left the office around five pm that day, and when they came outside there was a rental car... an upgrade from our huge, now torched red church van. We told them we were going to Chick Fil-A. So we drove to the Chick Fil-A in Cleveland, we arrived there at 8:02pm.

My kids love chick fil-a because they all basically have the same play place, and Dawn and I are able to just eat Chicken in peace while they rage in the play place. That day we met a church planting friend who is planting a church in Cleveland this Spring.

After Chick Fil-A, we got in the car, and I asked Milly, “okay... do you want to go home, or should we go to a hotel? They are about equally far away from here but in different directions.” She voted to go to a hotel, and was so excited. We basically told her, “lets just go on an adventure.”

So we went to a hotel somewhere in Pennsylvania.

The next day, we woke up and just kept on heading East... we had about four hours to drive from the hotel to the city, and another 45 to get the the beach where Milly’s cousins live.

So we just drove. and drove.

At one point she asked me, “daddy, where are we going?”

and I said, “Where do you want to go?”

“I don’t know” she said to me and then I said...

Milly, think for a moment... if you could go anywhere in the whole world, anywhere at all, where would you choose to go?”

She thought about it for a minute, and then said “A toy store!” She was so excited by her answer. Then I said to her, “Milly, we have tons of toy stores where we live... you are thinking small... think BIG!”

And she said “I don’t know how to think big.”

So then Dawn jumped in and said “Milly, if I could go anywhere, I would go to an airport, and fly to Italy.”

“ohhhhh Milly said... “If i could go ANYWHERE, I would go to an airport, and fly to my cousins house (in New York, exactly where we were heading... but when we moved to Detroit we flew, so she equated the journey with an airplane).

I said to her “That is more like it... lets think like that.”

Then I told her a little later, “Who knows Milly? Maybe we will just drive all the way until we hit the ocean, and we can’t drive anymore. The whole world is ours kid.”

She was excited about the idea, but still thought our final destination would likely be a toy store.

We were fortunate that it was a super foggy day and you couldn’t really see the city as we passed it, and she was reading a little book while we crossed the Verazanno Bridge so miraculously she didn’t recognize anything while we were driving. I pulled onto Beach 129th street which is the beach block her cousins live on, drove right past their house and all the way to the beach and stopped the car, jumped out frantically, and grabbed Milly and said “Lets go!” we cant drive anymore! We have to walk the rest of the way!

and we got out and got on the beach, and she saw the Ocean... i told her “Milly we are at the Ocean!” She got so excited... and I said to her “See Milly, you have to think BIG.”

Then she began to look around and she said to me, “this beach kind of reminds me of the beach by my cousins house.” and right when she said that I told her to turn around, and there her cousins were running through the sand up to her.

She was absolutely thrilled. Her and Brooklyn and Annabelle and Juliette ran to the Ocean in all of their clothes, it was freezing, it was probably not even 60 degrees out and they all ran just into the water and played and were so incredibly thrilled to see each other... Then when we were all walking back toward the house, I put my arm around my daughter and told her one more time... “Milly, always think BIG”

Always think big.
Always dream big.

Never let anybody else tell you what God has put in your heart to do.

and when he puts it there... do it. Run with it. Write the vision down so that it can be run with. Share it with others... don't cower in the corner with your dreams... remember God will do MORE than you can even imagine.

So imagine A LOT.

I will never, ever forget the moment that I first stepped foot on the campus of the Dream Center. and I stood in the center of this parking lot completely surrounded by five buildings, covering over 400,000 square foot of living space dedicated to the gospel. Dedicated to housing their internship program that gave them 200 more sets of feet on the ground in Los Angeles, who then dedicated themselves to going out and finding the marginalized, the broken, the lost, the hurting and the one who was apart from God...

and bringing THEM back to the dream center...

and loving them back to life.

and as the years went by and the programs grew and the staff grew and the 20 year construction project finally finished, they opened floors for human trafficking victims, and drug addicts, and homeless families. They started programs for foster care, and emancipated youth... they opened community centers, and a coffee shop, and a christian high school. They run the largest food bank in their city, and have a medical truck on site.

They turned outreach into discipleship.

and the hundreds of people who come off of the street and come into the dream center broken are leaving that place whole...

and more in love with Jesus than ever.

That, to me is, thinking bigger.
That is me, dreaming bigger.

Dreaming bigger and asking God to show me clearly, “What does Detroit need?” because I know that not everything that worked there will work here, just like not everything that worked there worked in New York.

Detroit is its own beast with its own pace and its own needs...

But the ministry is the same.

It is the ministry of Reconciliation.

and without a doubt in my mind, I believe that a discipleship based internship program is one of the first big steps toward reconciling people in a much farther reaching way.

and when I look back at that day on that “blacktop” as we called it, and I realize now that it was only the start of an incredible journey. One that I wasn’t looking for. Really, I wanted to be done with ministry before I even went to the Dream Center. I thought I was finished, I thought I moved to LA to do something new...

but that was really just the beginning.

And when I look at the idea of a hospital for hurting people, whatever that hurt may be... and the idea of a refuge of hope for the marginalized, and a growing community dedicated to cultivating a romance that reconciles people back to God wherever they are...

a two family flat seems easy.

A discipleship program seems easy.

65,000 dollars seems easy.

It seems like a baby step.

Because it is.

It is a baby step toward a God sized dream to change Detroit into a place that once lived in darkness, but now has seen a great light. And I don't know exactly what that light looks like, but I know that it illuminates hope in the darkest places, and I know that I just want to do my part.

Will you please pray about what your part will be? and about what God would have you to do in our first fruit offering.