

New York: Earning trust in unfamiliar territory

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Arriving in New York City was a huge culture shock. New York City has a population of 8 million-plus. At first, I told myself, “There’s no way I can live here.” I didn’t even feel the freedom to breathe. But then, it grew on me.

I am living in Manhattan and commuting to Brooklyn, where I work with Pastor Danny at Swerve Church. Bushwick is a 2-square-mile-wide neighborhood in Brooklyn that is home to 140,000 people. It is filled with art, culture and a great need for God.



Serving the people here, you learn very quickly you are in their territory, which makes ministry here very relational. You have to have many lunches, conversations and meetings before they ask why you’re even doing all those things to begin with. You earn their trust and the right to speak. But here’s the flip side: Once you’re in, you’re in. People here don’t go to church because their grandma wants them to, but because God is truly pulling them close to him, and you get to experience it.

Our church draws fewer than 10 members every Sunday, so it requires much patience, endurance and humility. I say this because it is so easy to get discouraged and even to judge because of how many broken people I see daily. We are called to make disciples of all nations, but God has brought the nations to us.

Jesus’ name is not welcome in this city, and neither are Christians. We are

vastly outnumbered. But Ed Stetzer once said: “Megacities are not a headache; it’s a divine opportunity. We may feel overwhelmed by this surge of humanity—but God isn’t.”

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