What if, instead of staying inside my thick, introverted shell, I prayed for courage to step out and build relationships with our neighbors? What if, instead of making a to-do list, I pray for God to guide my daily activities? What if, instead of waiting for people to knock on our door, I intentionally looked for ways to show Christ's love and kindness?

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here goes nothing

an introvert's reckless attempt to love her neighbor

bonus essay

BONUS ESSAY: Get to Know Your Neighbor, But Get to Know Yourself Too

I thought that moving to a developing country would turn me into Mother Teresa. I figured if we lived among impoverished people who even rang our doorbell to ask for things, then I would become champion of the command to love my neighbor.

At first it was exhilarating every time someone came to our door in search of bread or milk or extra change for medicine. It felt like we were opening up the gate to engage and feed an exotic creature, not a single mother with tattered clothes, greasy hair and a child tied to her back.

But eventually it became less than exhilarating to feed and clothe the poor. It turned out that no matter which country I lived in and no matter how many impoverished or wealthy people I surrounded myself with, it made me feel all bitter inside when people rang our doorbell at 9:30 p.m. My reaction wasn't to throw wide open the floodgates of hospitality and hot tea, my reaction was to shrivel up in anger at the fact that someone had broken in on my down time.

My introverted personality had begun to shine through the Mother Teresa façade I was trying to embody, and I didn't even realize it. I just thought I was a really terrible neighbor.

Many things make me an imperfect neighbor, but nothing has made me a bad neighbor as much as misunderstanding my own personality. I have always felt very passionate feelings about caring for the people stuck in a cycle of poverty and about learning the command to love my neighbor, but while we lived overseas and while Husband and I argued about whether or not we could ignore the doorbell just one time, I wondered, "If I am so passionate about this stuff, why do I hate actually doing this stuff?"

The first reason was that I simply didn't understand my own need for downtime. I thought that if I felt people-zapped after a week's worth of teaching first graders and all I wanted to do was curl up on a rug in the middle of an empty room on a Friday night, then I must be a selfish person. Nope, I am just an introvert who needs some space every once in awhile.

The more I understand my own needs as an introvert, the more I continue to realize that the act of resting away from people is just as loving toward my neighbor as it loves myself. Because nobody would want the grizzly, burnt out, people-zapped version of myself in their lives for very long. I'm much more human and much less monster if I create routine rest from the big, scary, peoply world we live in.

But I learned the other reason for this whole "I love trying to love my neighbor/I hate trying to love my neighbor" conundrum just a few months ago. A kind soul on my launch team for *Here Goes Nothing* shared the 16Personalities Test with our entire group, and my results were scary accurate.

The quiz told me I am an INFJ-type Introvert, the *intuitive*, *feeling*, *judging* kind:

> *INFJs tend to see helping others as their purpose in life, but while people with this personality type can be found engaging rescue efforts and doing charity work, their real passion is to get to the heart of the issue so that people need not be rescued at all.*[1]

That did not surprise me. There are all those "I want to do good things for Jesus in this world" feelings coming up again.

But when I scrolled through my initial profile, past my strengths, and on to the "Weaknesses" section, the words *Perfectionisitic, Always Need to Have a Cause,* and *Can Burn Out Easily* had me shouting amen too:

> *INFJs are all but defined by their pursuit of ideals…and INFJs too often drop or ignore healthy and productive situations and relationships, always believing there might be a better option down the road.*
>
> *INFJs get so caught up in the passion of their pursuits that any of the cumbersome administrative or maintenance work that comes between them and the ideal they see on the horizon is deeply unwelcome.*
>
> *People with this personality type are likely to exhaust themselves in short order if they don't find a way to balance their ideals with the realities of day-to-day living.*[2]

Yes. To all of it.

I am so intent on pursuing my ideal – the embodiment of the command to love my neighbor – that I ignore the very practical opportunities to apply this command. I get so caught up in the *idea* of helping the poor that the day-to-day realities of answering the doorbell become a burden instead of an embodiment of that goal.

At the church we attend in Milwaukee, I saw a sign hanging above the kitchen sink that sums up this discrepancy in my life quite nicely: "Everyone wants a revolution, but nobody wants to do the dishes. Start a revolution, and do the dishes."[3]

It's really cool to talk about building relationships with our neighbors and sharing the gospel with our neighbors. It's fun to intellectually bash the American Dream and boast the ideals of minimalism. It's thrilling to get to write a book about what it means to love our neighbors with reckless abandon and call it *Here Goes Nothing: An Introvert's Reckless Attempt to Love Her Neighbor.*

But do you want to know what is a lot less sexy? Washing the dishes after having our neighbors over for dinner. Making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for my kid to eat. Changing a nasty diaper. Caring for someone else's kid in the nursery on Sunday. Looking up dairy and gluten-free recipes for our friends with allergies. Sacrificing precious downtime to spend an evening

with a neighbor. Protecting precious downtime to rejuvenate for the next evening I'll spend with a neighbor. Answering the doorbell at 9:36 p.m.

I want a revolution of love to overcome our family and our neighborhood, but am I willing to put in the back work for what a revolution of love, kindness, and peace requires? Starting in our home, with my children and husband, and working its way outside our home's walls? These are honest questions I have had to ask myself and struggle over.

While I'm not actually a terrible neighbor, I *am* an introverted neighbor, and learning what that means in my unique version of "Introvert," in my unique circumstances, only helps me understand how I can best love others as much as I love myself. And while my personality tempts me away from loving my neighbor in various ways, there are many ways that loving others comes naturally to introverts like myself.

Introverts shouldn't get a bad rap just because we aren't extroverts. Just because we don't often love big crowds or large parties or being around people *all the time,* that doesn't mean we can't love people well or that we have nothing to offer:

> While I might have a very difficult time saying the first "hello" or making small talk with strangers, I am a great listener who is genuinely interested in a person's answers to the questions "why" and "how."
>
> While I crave deep friendships with other people, I don't require a lot of attention or upkeep. I'd rather spend one hour talking about life and love and other mysteries than spend an entire week at Disney World talking about Miley Cyrus with someone.
>
> While I might not always be great at articulating my thoughts out loud, I can use writing to express my feelings and encourage others.
>
> While I might not want to work the crowds at a church function, I greatly enjoy hiding in the kitchen with one or two other people to chat while we prepare food or clean up.
>
> While I might run away if you mention the words "street evangelism," my love for deep conversations with small groups of people becomes a means to talk about the work of Christ in my life.
>
> While I don't enjoy being the reason for a party or standing in the center of the spotlight for more than a few minutes, I enjoy being an encourager for the people who are.
>
> While I tend to have strong opinions about most things, I also strive to be a peacekeeper among people with different opinions than my own.

Whether extrovert or introvert, understanding our personalities means understanding how we relate and withdraw from the world around us. I am the same person in the first world as I am

in the developing world, which means that no matter where I pursue my ideologies, I will be an introvert who needs time to rejuvenate alone.

Being an introvert is not a hall pass from the command to love my neighbor or share the gospel, but it does mean the ways I do those things may look different from my fellow extroverted brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Body of Believers needs all types, and so do our neighborhoods. Get to know your neighbor, but get to know your own personality too.

Grace and Peace,
Kendra

Notes:
1. "INFJ Personality ('The Advocate')", *16Personalities*, December 27, 2016, https://www.16personalities.com/infj-personality.
2. "INFJ Strengths and Weaknesses", *16Personalities,* December 27, 2016, https://www.16personalities.com/infj-strengths-and-weaknesses.
3. Craig Greenfield, "Everybody wants a revolution, but no-one wants to do the dishes," *Craig Greenfield* (blog), April 6, 2016, http://www.craiggreenfield.com/blog/2016/dishesrevolution.