

I Hate You

1. Warm-up Question: We love asking and answering questions about the greatest thing in certain categories – greatest movie, greatest song, greatest restaurant. Let's pick one: What's the greatest restaurant you've ever experienced?
2. Jesus was once asked a "greatest things" question. In his case, he was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" He replied by quoting the opening portion of the Jewish Shema taken from Deuteronomy 6:5, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment." Matthew 22:37. But Jesus didn't stop there, he went on to answer the next obvious question: What does it look like to love God with all our heart? Quoting another Old Testament text (Leviticus 19:18), Jesus said, "And a second commandment is like the first: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and prophets." Matthew 22:39.
 - a. Jesus saw these two commandments – love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself – as inextricably intertwined. Why? What's the connection?
 - b. Read I John 4:20-21. What's John's point here? Why is it impossible to love God, whom we've never seen, if we don't love people whom we have seen?
 - c. Who is someone you struggle to love?
3. Hillel the Elder was a famous rabbi who died when Jesus was a teenager. Jesus certainly knew his teachings and probably even got to hear him speak at the temple. Hillel's teachings appear to have had an impact on Jesus. Once an unbeliever told Hillel, "I will convert provided you can explain your faith to me while I stand on one foot." Hillel accepted the challenge. Hillel only needed a few seconds. He simply quoted Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The unbeliever, still standing on one foot, dazed and amazed, became a convert.
 - a. How long can you stand on one foot? ☺ (Be honest now.)
 - b. If someone were to ask you to describe what it means to follow Jesus in a single sentence, what would you say? Would it be adequate to say, "Love your neighbor as yourself" – why or why not?
 - c. In recent months, have you witnessed any beautiful examples of someone loving their neighbor as themselves?
4. The command to love our neighbor as ourselves leads to an obvious follow-up question. "Who is my neighbor?" That question – asked by a lawyer who apparently had been influenced by both Jesus and Hillel – prompted Jesus to tell his most famous parable. Read Luke 10:25-37.

- a. In his telling of this story, why do you think Jesus chose to cast the priest and Levite in the role of indifferent passersby? What point was Jesus trying to make?
 - b. In his telling of the story, why do you think Jesus chose to cast a Samaritan as the hero? What point was Jesus trying to make.
 - c. Jews regarded Samaritans as culturally, ethnically, and religiously “foreign” or “different” and resented that they lived right in the middle of Israel “corrupting” the purity of Jewish faith and culture. What kind of people are Americans tempted to view that way in our time?
5. Jesus’ parable makes the point that everyone is our neighbor, especially those who are “different.” His parable challenges us to make a special effort to love those we regard as different. That begins when we dare to make contact with those who are different, dare to get to know them, and dare to listen with an open heart.
- a. A wise person once said, “Listening is so close to loving that we feel loved when we’re listen to.” What do you think that means? Do you agree?
 - b. In most of our Oasis Groups, we’re about to begin a 4-week study of Ibram Kendi’s book *How To Be An Antiracist*. Jeff said he’s looking forward to this study as an opportunity to listen deeply to our Black and Brown brothers and sisters. Some of Kendi’s ideas may really stretch those of us who are White. How do you feel about this upcoming study? How do you feel about being stretched on matters of race?
 - c. What’s true at the macro level on matters of race in our nation is also true at the micro level right at home where we live. If you’re married, you know. Your spouse is very different from you. The same can be said for our children and friends and coworkers. Jeff said, “What if the person who most needs me to be a better neighbor is not living next door or across town. What if it’s not the stranger on the street, but the person closest to me?” Who’s the person closest to you? Do you feel the two of you are doing a good job of deep listening? What tends to get in the way of listen deeply to those closest to us? (See p. 3 for a copy of the Deep Listening exercise Jeff suggested.)
6. Perhaps the hardest neighbor to love is the one who harms others.
- a. Suppose in Jesus’ parable, the Good Samaritan had come upon the scene as the bandits were attacking the victim. Since the bandits are also our neighbor, what does it look like to love them in that scenario? What would Jesus do?
 - b. Name someone from your personal life (or beyond) that you believe is harming others. What might it look like for you to love both the victim and victimizer in that situation? What’s the difference between loving and hating the victimizer?

Family Reunion Sunday, Sept. 20, 11:00 am. Wear a mask and socially distance. BYO lawn chair or blanket. Extra chairs provided. We’ll still livestream for any who can’t be there.

Deep Listening Exercise

We invite you to do this with your spouse or someone else you're very close to. Ask and answer the following three questions.

At this point in your life . . .

1. At this point in your life, what is your greatest aspiration?
2. What is your greatest fear?
3. What is one of your greatest memories of our time together?