

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?

kendra broekhuis

here goes
Nothing.

an introvert's reckless
attempt to love her neighbor

Praise for *Here Goes Nothing*

“Kendra writes from the heart about her hilarious attempts to reach out to her neighbors. If you’re an introvert like me, you’ll appreciate the cringe factor, but also the longing for a world where we are more deeply connected to one another. Truly subversive.”

—Craig Greenfield

Founder of Alongsiders International

and author of *Subversive Jesus*

“Richly combining Scripture and sarcasm, Kendra Broekhuis’s adventures in neighboring could be read for pure entertainment value—you will be delighted with her witty perspectives on parenting, walking with God, and relationships with Other People. But I must warn you that you can’t read *Here Goes Nothing* without being poked and prodded and deeply convicted of your calling to love your neighbor, even if you’re ‘80 percent more comfortable sustaining eye contact while wearing sunglasses.’ Introverts like Kendra and even extroverts like me will turn each page with a new appreciation for God’s design of our unique personality for His glory, in our homes with the neighbors who surround us.”

—Amy Lively

Author of *How to Love Your*

Neighbor Without Being Weird

“Kendra puts legs on the gospel and gets us out into our neighborhoods. She doesn’t just tell us to be good neighbors; she shows us how, modeling a kind of loving that turns cupcakes

into conversations. She also made me gut-laugh multiple times, which earns her some crazy respect. After reading this, I want to bust into her introverted world and make her be my friend. She sees spiritual nuggets in everything from apple crisp to maxi pads, and I love her for it.”

—Melanie Dale

Author of It's Not Fair: Learning to Love the Life You

Didn't Choose and Women Are Scary: The Totally

Awkward Adventure of Finding Mom Friends

“Ordinary obedience to Jesus isn’t glamorous, and it isn’t a formula, which is why I so appreciate Kendra Broekhuis’s message in *Here Goes Nothing*. Too often, we want something to show for our efforts—a shiny takeaway, or a tidy triumph—which can leave us feeling defeated and alone. Addressing this disconnect, Kendra depicts a more honest picture of faith. Detailing her shortcomings and the lessons born out of them, she invites us into her thirty-day journey of intentional discipleship. Her daily meditations are full of meat but easy to digest, leading readers deeper without weighing them down. This book is ‘not a success story,’ but it is an encouragement and a helpful guide.

—Sharon Hodde Miller

Author and blogger

“If you are an introvert—no, wait—if you are a person who wants to love your neighbor because Jesus commanded you to but gets overwhelmed at the idea, please read this book. Kendra Broekhuis has given us a gift in *Here Goes Nothing: An Introvert's Reckless Attempt to Love Her Neighbor*. It is relatable, hilarious, honest, and inspiring all at once. I feel both understood as an

introvert who treasures people but doesn't always want to be with them and challenged to push through my own awkward to actively love anyway. In a world where we are increasingly disconnected, this book pushes us toward our 'neighbor' in beautiful ways."

—Alexandra Kuykendall

Author of *Loving My Actual Life* and cohostess
of *The Open Door Sisterhood Podcast*

"Wise and funny, Kendra takes you along for the ride on her adventure to love her neighbors. Full of encouragement and practical information, *Here Goes Nothing* is a perfect guide for introverts and extroverts alike."

—Kristin Schell

Author of *The Turquoise Table: Finding Community
and Connection in Your Own Front Yard*

"Kendra Broekhuis's *Here Goes Nothing: An Introvert's Reckless Attempt to Love Her Neighbor* is one of those rare reads that has you nodding your head and smiling throughout. From her description of the Baby Buffer to her #SarcasmFont, I recognized my mom-self on page after page. Kendra is that friendly mom who leaves you feeling happier than when she found you, while she quietly displays Christ's love to all she meets. She left me asking myself, 'How can I be the light of Christ in my everyday?'"

—Kim de Blecourt

Author of *Until We All Come Home: A Harrowing Journey,
a Mother's Courage, a Race to Freedom*; international
speaker and president of NourishedHearts.org

“*Here Goes Nothing* equips introverts like me to love the world that God loves. That’s a big win, right? It also gives extroverts a rare glimpse into our curious inner workings. With humor, insight, and courage, Kendra Broekhuis helps us all be the people we were created to be.”

—Margot Starbuck

Author of *Small Things With Great Love*

“I love the way Kendra Broekhuis creatively intertwines motherhood with mission! Through her honest and delightful way of looking at life, she offers us a positive way to live every day. *Here Goes Nothing* is filled with inspirational stories and personal reminders of how we can open our eyes to the ordinary and see God working in the midst of our daily circumstances.”

—Karol Ladd

Author of *The Power of a Positive Mom*

“I love this book and its authentic approach. Kendra Broekhuis takes us inside the mind of the introverted Christ follower as she learns to engage the people who live right outside her front door. Her self-deprecating humor makes *Here Goes Nothing* easy and fun to read. Kendra reminds us all that taking the first small step is the key to experiencing change. This is a must-read for anyone who desires to make a difference in their community.”

—Dave Runyon

Coauthor of *The Art of Neighboring*



here goes

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attempt to love her neighbor

kendra broekhuis



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*For Jesus. Who loved me first.
And for my neighbors. Whom I want
to better love in return.*

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Before We Get Started

*God does not need our good works,
but our neighbor does.*

—Martin Luther¹

This is not a success story.

And it's not one of those stories that has a beginning, a middle, and then a perfectly tidy ending either. It's really just a beginning.

You see, for thirty days I prayed, *God, help me to maintain the joy of being Wife and Mommy amid the daily grind. To see the world through Your eyes. To live intentionally. To build relationships and share Christ's love with our neighbors. To learn what it really means to give. To collide motherhood with mission.*

This became my motto, my credo, my personal mission statement of sorts.

Some days it led to actions the Lord gently nudged me to take. Other days it led to reflections the Lord gently whispered into my heart. Every day it led to one word, one underlying theme that tied all thirty days—all thirty chapters—and their wide variety of topics together: *giving*.

These thirty days—September 29 through October 29, 2014, to be exact—found us in a strange time of transition. We had just moved back to the United States after teaching for

three years in the beautiful country of Guatemala. We were living in a new city, residing in a new apartment building, and searching for a new church. And we wanted to put it all together: all of our experiences, all of the things we had just seen and learned and read and discussed. I wouldn't call it a clean slate—just a chance to live intentionally.

Before we moved back to the United States, we sat down with our dear friends and InnerCHANGE missionaries, Nate and Myra. They gave us guidance to work through our transition as well as our desire as a family to pursue more than our own happiness. When we asked them, “What do we do first?” their answer was this: “Get to know your neighbors.”

It might sound like strange advice, but it made sense. Jesus told us to love God and love our neighbor. Many times the word *neighbor* is meant to be vague, but our friends knew that it shouldn't always be. They knew that part of being mission-minded, no matter where you live or work, is being willing to love the people closest to you, people you often overlook. I tell you this because our neighbors—as in the people who lived in the other eleven apartments in our building—were who I often found the Lord's generosity overflowing to and from during these thirty days.

Sitting in the kitchen of our apartment in Guatemala, listening to Nate and Myra's advice, I felt excited, inspired. But one long bus ride to the airport, two flights to the United States, and three months later, the idea of actually focusing our lives on connecting with strangers made me want to dry heave just a little bit.

Like the typical introvert, being around new people for an extended amount of time makes me weary. And when a stranger enters my personal-space bubble, a whole host of

physical changes happens in my body. My everywhere begins to sweat. I worry that I need an extra swab of deodorant or a breath mint. My mouth turns to cotton, and from the pit of my stomach emerges a host of butterflies. And if I can get past the physical hurdles of meeting someone new, then I have to get past the mental block of trying to think of a good question to ask, which quickly turns into twenty dumb questions I shouldn't ask.

I mean, the whole scenario is like watching Middle School and Puberty get married and have a baby named Awkward. I can give socializing with strangers a good effort, but then I usually need a prescription of lonely solitude for at least an hour after the ordeal. Which is why when people talk about things like building relationships and sharing the gospel with my neighbors, I would rather take a second and throw up in Baby's diaper bag.

But I'm afraid that at times I let my introversion become an excuse, that maybe I play that card too often. Unfortunately, our technology-obsessed culture is not helping me develop the courage and social skills to look into people's eyes and just say hello. I hover behind my screens instead of being available to those I pass by every day. I avoid relationships that take more work than using my thumbs to text. I say, "Hello, how are you?" and "Good, you?" to our neighbors and never take the next steps to get to know them.

But 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 prayed 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?

Here goes nothing, I thought, and so began thirty days of

finding out a few answers to these questions. *What if?* Well, God just might give you a small taste of what it means to recklessly love your neighbor.

Now, a few disclaimers.

Disclaimer #1: I don't believe any generous thing I do can earn my way to heaven.

I believe only the generous thing Jesus has already done can save me, faith in Christ alone.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Eph. 2:8–9)

I believe that giving is part of the answer to “Now what?” As in, *I believe in You, Jesus! But now what?* Because right after the verses about God's grace and our faith, it says this:

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (v. 10)

Generosity is essential not because I think I can earn my way to heaven but because I have been given eternal life in heaven, for free. I give not out of a futile mind-set of repayment but out of sheer gratitude.

Disclaimer #2: My circumstances are different from yours.

Our situations, relationships, experiences, life stages, histories, husbands, babies, parenting styles, denominations, ages, in-laws, education, houses, bills of health, finances, locations, and methods of wiping our bottoms may be different from each other's. And that's okay; that's great.

I am “just” a stay-at-home mom. My husband is “just” a high school science teacher. At the time these thirty days happened, we had “just” one fourteen-month-old daughter. We lived in “just” a two-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment, and we owned “just” one car and two bikes. While we can’t compare lives, I pray we can encourage one another, challenge one another, and cheer one another on, even in our differences.

Disclaimer #3: The resources at the end of each chapter are optional.

I provided reflection questions, actions to take, and passages to read. All are meant to be extensions for anyone looking to take that chapter’s concept of giving deeper. But I don’t want to be the bearer of unnecessary guilt, unrealistic expectations, or overworked schedules. Use the “To Take This Deeper” resources if that’s what the Lord is laying on your heart; don’t otherwise. I don’t know your life. You do; God does.

Disclaimer #4: This is not an easy, thirty-day plan for how to become a generous person.

Like I said, it’s not a success story. And the commands to love God and love your neighbor are not always effortless. It’s a lifelong lesson that’s about as comfortable to learn as middle school sex ed, and about as easy as teaching middle school sex ed class.

So whether you are making the commitment to read this book one day at a time, one page at a time; by binge reading; or in a book club with your besties, I pray with my whole heart that God will use it to encourage you, challenge you, and cheer you on both to *recognize* His message of “I love you” in the everyday moments of your own life and to *be* His message of “I love you” to the everyday people in your life.



Five Quarters and a Tide Detergent Pod

Give What I Have

*It's not how much we give but how
much love we put into giving.*

—Mother Teresa¹

Pay for someone's laundry.

It was a fleeting thought, something I could easily push past, ignore, and forget about as I got on with the rest of my morning. But I had been praying again recently. I say “again” because it had been far too long since prayer was a regular part of my day. It was one of those things I easily buried beneath the unscrubbed dishes, stinky diapers, and dirty laundry. I was like, “Prayer? Ain’t nobody got time for that!”

I had my moments of being a prayer warrior princess. Like that time when I was giving birth to Baby and cried, “*Just get it out!*” And like that other time when we were going to move

back to the United States from Guatemala and we begged God to give Husband a job so we wouldn't have to live with my parents forever. I think that prayer was, *Just get us out!*

But prayer was becoming more than a desperate cry for help. Recently I had been praying for some inspiration from the Lord, for ways I could be more alert to His voice, for inventiveness in how I could share His love with our neighbors.

I believe when people pray, the Lord answers. Sometimes, like the prophet Elijah, I expect God to answer in the great and powerful winds, the earthquakes, and the fires. But sometimes God chooses to speak in gentle whispers (1 Kings 19:11–13).

Gentle whispers, like God saying:

You are wonderfully made (Ps. 139:14).

I will take care of you (Ps. 55:22).

Trust Me (Prov. 3:5).

Remain in Me (John 15:4).

Follow Me (Matt. 4:19).

I love you (John 3:16).

Share My love with others (Mark 12:31).

Give to others as I gave to you (Matt. 10:8).

His tender voice can be heard in Scripture, in prayer, in the wise words of a friend, and in those beautifully ordinary moments of the day that surprise me like an affectionate kiss on the cheek. God doesn't always shout or post billboards or share Facebook memes like I wish He would, but He speaks.

Pay for someone's laundry.

My Monday morning had been extremely ordinary until that point. So far I had vacuumed Sunday's crumbs, washed Sunday's dishes, and planned what I was going to cook for Monday night's dinner. Next was laundry. I had just returned from a nine-day trip to Guatemala and come home to the

realization that almost everything made of fabric in our apartment was due for a good washing. I gathered the blue mesh bag bursting at the seams with our dirty laundry with one hand, straddled Baby on my hip with the other, and dragged everything down two flights of stairs to the laundry room. It was while I was dragging and heaving and sweating that this idea brushed my mind.

Pay for someone's laundry.

Now, random thoughts cross my mind all the time. I think it is part of being an introvert. If I'm not going to talk to other people, I might as well talk to myself. (*Am I right, Self?*) Most of the time I just brush it off and go about my day like I'm not crazy, but this thought was different. I decided to stop ignoring and start listening.

Pay for someone's laundry.

Nothing fancy, nothing life changing, nothing—ironically—worth writing a book about. Nothing terrifyingly reckless for my introverted self to do, like speaking words out loud to a stranger. Nothing deeply sacrificial, except donating quarters, of course. It was only twenty-five cents, but now that we lived in an apartment building with coin laundry, trying to find quarters was like trying to mine for diamonds in the parking lot.

While my mountain of laundry was in the dryer, I scribbled on an obnoxiously yellow sticky note, *Dear Neighbor, Please enjoy a free load of laundry. I prayed for you this morning, and I hope you feel Christ's love throughout your day.* Simple. Encouraging. Not too creepy, I hoped.

Next, I needed quarters. After scrounging through the coin jar, my wallet, the car, and the couch, I found only five.

Well, that's extremely lame, I thought. *Five measly*

quarters? Enough to fill only one of the two laundry machines and neither of the dryers? Why am I even bothering?

Give what you have.

The second whisper, and my first lesson. Then my adult temper tantrum. *But, Lord, I wanted to be able to give more; I wanted to give enough for two laundry machines and one dryer. I wanted to give fourteen quarters, not five! And I wanted to be able to do it all by myself!*

Give what you have.

Sometimes I think things like, *If I can't do it all by myself, then I'm not going to do it at all.* I let either my pride or my insecurities get in the way of giving. But the reality is, I don't have enough of anything to do it "all by myself." I'm only expected to do my part, to give what I have, no shame or pride, no matter how humble or glamorous it is. God has equipped me with exactly what I need to accomplish His will. He can still do great things with whatever I am able to offer up in worship.

I think about that boy and his five loaves of bread and two fish (Matt. 14:13–21). What if he hadn't brought them forward when Jesus had a hungry megachurch congregation to feed? What if he had decided to be a little punk and say, "Well, that's extremely lame! Five measly loaves and two scrawny fish? I wanted to be able to give more, to feed all five thousand! *All by myself!*" First, that's just absurd. Second, the boy would have missed out on an opportunity to share in Christ's miraculous demonstration of His power. It may have been a humble offering, but did that make the outcome any less effective, any less miraculous?

Jesus again emphasized the concept of "give what you have" to His disciples as they watched people present their offerings at the temple:

Five Quarters and a Tide Detergent Pod

Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

(Mark 12:41–44)

I can’t always give a lot, but that is no excuse to keep from giving. I can always give what I have, right now, in this moment, and trust God to provide the rest. My time, my money, my talents, and when I’m really feeling it, my mojo. Some days it might be enough to buy two loads of laundry and feed five thousand; other days it might be less.

I stuck the five quarters in the washing-machine slot and weighted the sticky note with a Tide detergent pod. Throughout the rest of the morning I kept the promise I wrote on the sticky note. I prayed this gift would bless whoever needed it most in our building, and for the discovery to be timed in a special way that would point him or her to Jesus. Maybe I was expecting too much out of five quarters and a Tide detergent pod, but I figured if they weren’t meant for performing some sort of miracle, at least someone else in our apartment building might appreciate not having to mine for quarters in order to wash his or her laundry.

I gave what I had that day, but I probably learned even more. The funny thing is that the quarters likely were not mine. Chances are they came from a butter tub of quarters my dad gave us when he learned we had to do coin laundry in our new apartment building. And the Tide detergent pod

Here Goes Nothing

definitely wasn't mine—or at least not originally. My mom gave me a huge box of them when we moved. (My parents, I love them. Also, they think we're poor.)

But isn't that the perfect reflection of what giving is? Is anything I give actually mine? No, what I give is never my own; what I share is never from what I have created or collected or earned or harbored for myself. What I give is always an overflow of the gifts and the love I have been given in Christ.

I didn't know what the impact of five quarters, a Tide detergent pod, and a sticky note would be. While He is able, I didn't expect God to multiply it into five thousand loads of laundry. But even when I have nothing left to give, I always have a prayer to pray. I can pray it will make a difference in someone's day, pray it will point him or her to Christ, pray it will encourage.

I can pray the Lord will speak into my heart again tomorrow, pray I will be paying close enough attention to hear Him.

To Take This Deeper

Give What I Have

- **Reflect:** Have there ever been times when you chose not to give because you didn't feel like what you had was a lot or like it would be enough? Trust that God has equipped you with the perfect amount of gifts, talents, and money. Trust that He can multiply your gift and use it just as it is to accomplish His work.
- **Take Action:** Pray for God to reveal to you an act of kindness you can do for one of your neighbors.

Five Quarters and a Tide Detergent Pod

No matter how random it might seem, listen to God's instruction and follow through with that act of kindness. Pray that the neighbor you give to will be blessed by your gesture, which says, "I care about you."

- **Read:** Read 2 Corinthians 12:9–10. Be encouraged as Paul talks about Christ's power being made perfect through his weaknesses. We aren't enough all by ourselves, but Christ is. Always.



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