



HILL COUNTRY
BIBLE CHURCH | AUSTIN



Won't You Be My Neighbor

Tim Hawks, Lead Pastor

July 7, 2013

Well good morning. (congregation says good morning) People sure have a lot of questions about God, don't they? I'm sure you have a lot of questions about God if you just stopped and thought about it for a minute. So I wonder if asked this question, how would you respond: How often do you personally have conversations with people who have not put their faith in Jesus yet, about belief,

about God, about purpose in life, about spiritual things? Is it a couple of times a day? Do you personally have these conversations maybe a couple of days a week? Maybe a couple of times a month? Can you think of the last time you had a direct, engaged, authentic, genuine personal conversation? Has it been in the last year or would you say never? Now I recognize some of you here have never put your trust in Jesus yet. You're still on the journey of faith, kind of wondering about it, and we're glad you're here. Welcome. We're excited that you're here and you're part of our congregation today. For those of you who have crossed the line of faith, are you personally on any kind of a regular basis having spiritual conversations with people? Is that going on in your life and are you doing that?

Do you realize that that survey that said 61 – it was actually about 61.8% of the people if they were invited into a conversation would be happy to explore God in a conversation – do you realize that that survey took place in Austin, Texas. I know it – it's unbelievable. That means 6 out of 10 people that you pass on 183, 6 out of 10 people that live in your neighborhood, 6 out of 10 people in your workplace, in the school you attend, 6 out of 10 in answer to this survey said that they would be interested in having a conversation to explore God with another person. So maybe the issue is not that the community is not open; maybe the issue is the people of faith are not open to engage in these conversations. We're not seeing much of that. Is it possible that a person could live their life as a Christian with the best news in the world day after day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year and not talk about it with someone else? I would suggest to you that there are people who, when it comes to understanding their knowledge of the Bible and theology are stellar, like they know it. When it comes to being passionate in their worship they're exceedingly passionate about the glory of God and worshiping Jesus Christ. When it comes to doing things right to be socially conservative or correct about the way you and society ought to live, you could be really big on getting that right when it comes to actually serving in ministry, and yet miss the greatest commandment of all of scripture. Miss it completely. Now you say, "Well that seems real improbable to me." But the man we're going to talk about in the story we're going to look at today actually was those things and he did miss it.

So grab a Bible and turn to Luke chapter 10. I want you to see a conversation that took place with Jesus and another individual who was a religious leader, and I want you to see how this unfolds. Now most of the people in this room have heard this story before. What I want to do is make sure that you hear the story as Jesus himself and the man involved experience this story together, and then we're going to make application to our lives. So we see in Luke chapter 10, starting in verse 25, it says:

"On one occasion—"

So this was a very definite circumstance or situation.

"an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus."

Now when you read that phrase "expert in the law", a legal scholar your translation may have scribe, what this person did was they studied the Old Testament law. They knew the first five books of the Bible backwards and forward, they were experts in that. That was their job. And when it came to answering questions or settling disputes about the ceremonial portions of the law, the civil portions of the law, or the moral portions of the Old Testament law, these were the people you went to. Being experts in it, they were also expected to practice it well and they were considered the religious scholars. In other words, if you ever have a question about the Old Testament and you lived in Jesus' day, these would be the people you would go to. If you ever wanted to find out what does God say about something, these are the people you would go to.

Now this particular person is asking Jesus a question to test him. The word "test" there literally could be translated "to entrap him." In other words he's going to ask a question trying to trip Jesus up to humiliate this so-called backwoods rabbi when coming face-to-face with a real spiritual scholar in the Bible, and so he asks this question:

"Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'"

Now we know this is a theoretical conversation because he's trying to test Jesus or trap Jesus with this question. And the question is really straightforward. It's a "do" question. What must I do? In other words, what must I practice, what must my behavior be in order to inherit eternal life? In other words, how do I go to heaven? How do I get into the kingdom? What do I need to do now to ensure that my soul is secure forever? That's the question he's asking. It's a "do" question - what do I have to do?

Jesus, verse 26 replied:

"What is written in the Law?" he replied. 'How do you read it?'"

Frequently Jesus asks a question as a follow-up to a question that's been asked him. In fact, if somebody asked you a question about life, about God, about the Bible, frequently if you'll just ask them what they know about it or what they think about it, you'll find out a lot of information. Jesus does this all the time.

He does this all the time with people. We would think that since Jesus knew everything that he would be the one that people would ask questions and he'd just start giving them the answers – spitting it out. That's what we frequently do. We think if we're asked a question, okay let me think back, what do I know, and boom – we're preaching to people. You know really, the methodology that we're supposed to use in the community is reserve the preaching for the church. Let the Holy Spirit do the preaching. In the community ask questions, get to know what people are thinking and then commentate on what they're thinking. Frequently a person will lead themselves to Christ through the Holy Spirit as they probe and you listen and you interact and you interject. So Jesus lets him answer his own question, and look what he says in verse 27:

“He answered, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

The great commandment – spits it right out, just as clean as can be. Verse 28:

“You have answered correctly.” Replied Jesus. ‘Do this and you will live.’”

In other words if you do these two things – love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself, if you do these two things you will go to heaven. You will live, you will have eternal life. Now let's pause for a moment and see what these two things actually are.

The first one he says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.” That comes right from the key passage in Deuteronomy 6:5 that we call the Shimah. It was read every morning and every evening in the temple. “Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” And because there's only one God, that's the premise, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Love him completely. In other words we are supposed to love God with all of me. I'm supposed to love God with all of me. All of my being directed toward God.

The second part – “Love your neighbor as yourself,” comes from Leviticus 19:18, and basically what that command tells us is we're supposed to love our neighbor as me. So I love the Lord my God with all of me, and I love my neighbor as me, and Jesus says, “If you can do those two things you'll be pleasing to God, you'll go to heaven, you'll get eternal life.”

Now I want you to see the turn in the conversation. Look what he says:

"But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'"

Now let's pause there for a second. He wants to justify himself. Now why does he need to justify himself? Well hopefully you've applied those two things to yourself right now in this setting, and you go "I guess I ain't gonna to inherit eternal life. I guess I ain't gonna go to heaven because I have never loved God with all of me and I've never loved my neighbor as me." In other words, when you think about those two commands to love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength - I mean I've got to be honest with you. I've not done that perfectly. In fact, I haven't even done a mediocre job of that. There are lots of things that I want to reserve for myself. There are habits and desires and thoughts and words that come out of my mouth that don't always reflect a total and complete devotion to God. We call those things idols, right? Have you perfectly your whole life loved God completely with every aspect of your being? Some of you probably are delusional to think that, but you just need to ask your friends, ask your family. They'll point it out to you - they'll be happy to do that for you.

And then love your neighbor as yourself? "You mean in every single situation that I've treated every person with the kind of dignity, respect, care, compassion, even mean people - I've treated them like I want to be treated?" "No way. I've not done that." So what do I do if I haven't loved God with all of me, and I haven't loved my neighbor as me, and that's what it takes to get into heaven. The man has to figure out some other way. So rather than doing what a normal response would be, and that would be to say, "Oh Jesus I'll never get to heaven on that basis. I've never loved God perfectly with every part of my being. I've never treated every human perfectly. I'm broken, I need help, I repent. Help me Jesus, God intervene, give me grace, give me mercy. Save me." Rather than doing that, he wants to justify himself. "Well I'm not that bad. Well I've done pretty good with this." I want you to notice when self-justification time comes around we frequently turn our "do" questions into "know" questions. K-N-O-W. He asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life", and now he's asking, "Well who is my neighbor? Who is my neighbor?" Frequently when we are facing the reality that we have not done what we've been asked to do by God, we start trying to redefine the terms. And so things happen like this - we read in Ephesians 5, "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church," and we go, "Are you kidding me. Do you know my wife?" So let's talk about wife and "What is the real definition of wife," and well "What does love really mean anyway," and "What does it mean to love as Christ loved the church, and maybe I need to do a long study on Christology and Ecclesiology so I can find out what John Calvin said about all these things so that I'll be able to understand how to love my wife as Christ loved the church.

So I'm glad we're doing a sermon series starting next week on Modern Family, because after 7 or 8 weeks of that and then I can start trying to figure out how this works because all the books I've read and all the courses I've taken up to this point in time, I haven't really loved my wife", right? And Jesus says, "Just do it." Just do it. We spend so much time studying and so little time practicing what we've been called to do. And so this guy turns a "do" question into a "know" experience. Do you ever find yourself doing that? It's too hard to do so let me go study some more.

So let's answer his question here. He says, "Who is my neighbor?" That's what he asked. "Who is my neighbor?" Now the Hebrew word for neighbor basically means somebody who crosses paths with you. So anybody that crosses your path would be your neighbor. The Greek word for neighbor is the word that means close proximity. So if somebody is nearby you, they are your neighbor. But the rabbi's knew that they would never be able to inherit heaven because of their lack of love for their neighbor, so in Jesus' day there were three different interpretations of who a neighbor is. Let me give them to you quickly. The first one the rabbi said, some of them said, "Well a neighbor is someone who's neighborly." In other words they're nice to you. Thus the phrase, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemies." Jesus said, "You guys say love your neighbor and hate your enemies, but I say to you love your enemies. Pray for those people who use you, who despise you, who treat you wrong." Like what credit do you get if you love the people who love you? But that was one of the definitions. So if people are nice to you, then you have to be nice to them. Love your neighbor as yourself. If they're nice to you, you're nice to them. Return the favor.

The second definition that they used for neighbor was, "A neighbor is someone who's supposed to be in the neighborhood." In other words, since God gave the Promised Land to Israelites, "We're good with all of Israelites. But if somebody crosses the border, whether it's a Roman soldier or whether it's a slave from some other country, whether it's a foreigner that's here - we do not have to love those people. We do not have to treat them right. They're not supposed to be here." That's a big issue for us who live on a border state, right? Love the people who are supposed to be here.

The third definition was, "You need to be a neighbor to those who are true blue you." You say, "What do you mean by that?" Well it's not good enough just to be an Israelite; it's whether you're really acting like an Israelite. So the Pharisees, the religious leaders would say, "All of those people that truly keep the law, that practice their faith the way we were practicing, those are the real people, they're the real McCoy, they're the real deal. Those are the people that we're supposed to be neighborly to." And some of us feel the same way - "If

you vote for the party that I vote for I'm going to treat you well. If you don't, I'm not. If you're from an alternative lifestyle that I don't support, I don't have to treat you well. I don't have to be a neighbor to you. If you're the person in the neighborhood that's irregular, maybe you turn me in for watering on the wrong day or whatever, I don't have to be because you're not a true neighbor. Like who does that?" So basically that last definition was so narrow you could kind of pick and choose the people that were good enough to be your neighbor, and it's in the midst of this confusion where we probably need to take the next 20 years and just study the etiology of the words here and the context because we'll never really know, right, what a neighbor is? Jesus blows this whole theoretical conversation out of the water by going to a real, live person. A real human example. Notice what he does. Jesus' response is in verse 30:

"Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him, and went away leaving him half dead.'"

Now this kind of stuff happened all the time. Jericho was 17 miles south of Jerusalem and it was a downhill trek that way. What would happen is people would live in the suburbs, like Jericho, because Jerusalem was high-dollar living. They would make things, they would do things, and then they would carry their merchandise up to Jerusalem, and so they would sell it there and then they would bring the money back. So a man coming back usually had money. And along the way there were a lot of gangs that hung out in this area, and frequently people got nabbed on the road. It wasn't uncommon. In this particular man's case a gang got him. The first thing that they did was they stripped off his clothes. The reason why is because having a suit of clothing, one garment is all anybody had in the ancient world unless you were super rich, and then you had two. So not to have the clothes on your back literally meant that all you had was the skin on your back. Clothes were valuable. They stripped him of his clothes and it says they beat him. Think of cuts, bruises, lacerations, maybe cracked ribs, maybe a concussion. And it says they left him half dead. Now half dead is a euphemism for "I'm still alive, but I'm on my way to being fully dead." So this guy's in dire straits. And here's what Jesus is asking: "Who will be a neighbor to this man?" Who will be a neighbor to this individual? Throw out all your discussion and let's talk about a person, a real individual, who will be a neighbor to this man. And Jesus says there are only two options for response here, and he gives the first one:

"A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side."

So a priest is traveling down the Jericho road when he sees the man laying there. We don't know what condition he is, he's obviously naked, he's beaten up. If you can picture that in your mind -- I don't know if he's moaning, if he's moving, or if he's laying there still, but he's laying there on the side of the road and the priest is coming from Jerusalem. Now the job of the priest in Jerusalem was to lead worship. So the priest is coming from the temple where he pronounced blessings over the people, where he read the Shimah, "Hear oh Israel the Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength." He would have read that to the people. Maybe he helped them sacrifice their animals as they were confessing their sins and he prayed the blessing over them. Maybe he was the one who prepared the incense and actually carried it right into the presence of God, right there at the curtain before the Holy of Holies. Who knows what all he personally did, but he would be like the preacher or the worship leader -- like the Clayton at Hill Country Bible Church on Sunday morning, or the Tim or the Russell. And he goes and he sees the guy on the side of the road, clearly sees him because he's in his lane. So it says that he changed lanes and he accelerated on by. The second guy does the same thing.

"So to a Levite," -

Now the Levites were the ones who helped the priest. They would be like the deacons if you're Baptist. They get things ready, they fix things, they make things happen, they support the priest. So he's come from the temple too. And when he gets to the guy watch what happens.

"when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side."

So here's the first option -- when asked the question who will be a neighbor to this person, to this person. "It's not my problem." Option one -- "This is not my problem. This is not my deal. I don't have any responsibility for this person." That's option #1. The second option we see in verse 33.

"But a Samaritan" -

Ahhhh. Jesus used this word in Jewish company. It's kind of like saying Samaritan would be like saying Voldemort. You know, he who must not be named. You see the Samaritans were a special group of people, and I say that in the most derogatory way. The Samaritans were the people who were left in the land when Nebuchadnezzar carried all the Israelites off into captivity and they were the ones that were too sick, too old, or too poor to be able to make the journey. They were kind of the worthless leftovers. They stayed in the land during that 70 years, and during that 70 years the other displaced peoples that

moved in there from all the other Gentile nations, they intermarried. They strengthened their society; they became the Samaritans. They integrated pagan worship into Jewish worship and came up with their own syncretistic worship. So as far as the Jews were concerned, these people were half-breeds, they were traders, they were religious syncretists. They didn't have anything to do with them. In fact, Samaria where these people lived was right between Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee and most Jews would walk all the way around rather than cut through because they would not want to have a conversation with a Samaritan, and Jesus says:

"But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him."

That word pity is a very important word. Throughout history people have realized that whenever you have empathy, whenever you see someone or know of someone and you begin to feel what they feel that something begins to happen down in the gut. And this word pity literally comes from a root word that means "the guts." It's a feeling that starts inside of you and drives into action frequently bypassing your brain. You don't stop and logic your way around it. You don't stop and study the situation. You don't stop and think it through. You just see it, you feel it, something's got to be done and you engage with it. In other words, the second option in seeing that man, "If it were me." "If it were me, if it was my son laying there, if it was my wife laying there, if it was my best friend laying there what would I want someone to do?" What would I want someone to do? And the guy immediately jumps into it and he begins to do it. Look at what it says in verse 34:

"He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine."

In other words, immediate first aide.

"Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him."

So he transports him to the emergency care unit - an inn, and he takes him in and he begins to take care of him. In fact, he spends the night by his side - it says "the next day." So he spends the night there making sure that the guy's okay. It says:

"The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper."

And he says:

"Look after him,"

Two silver coins in that day would have purchased about 7 days worth of lodging and food and care. So he pays for his hospital stay. And then it goes on to say, he said:

"he said, 'and when I return I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'"

In other words, clothing. The guy's naked - he's not going to leave without clothing. Probably bus fare or maybe some spending money along the way. He said, "When I come back you send him out fully whole. I don't want this guy to have to go through anything because of what happened to him. I want to bear all of the costs for that myself. I want to burden myself with his pain. I want to make sure he's taken care of because that's what I would want someone to do for me or mine if we were in that situation." He's loving his neighbor as he would want to be loved, right?

Then I want you to see the twist that Jesus puts in this. Verse 36:

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

He's not asking the question, "Is this man your neighbor? Or who is my neighbor?" He's asking the question, "Are you a neighbor? Are you the neighbor?" We can talk all about the other people, but he's bringing it back - which of us is a neighbor. And notice what the man says:

"The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.'"

He won't even say Samaritan.

"The one who had mercy on him.' Jesus told him, 'Go and—"

What's that word?

'do likewise.'"

What must I do to inherit eternal life. Jesus says, go and do this; back to obedience. Go and do this.

Now when we get to this story we have our own way of justifying ourselves. I know I've been doing it, okay. We have our own way. The first justification, here's how we do it. We say, "Well of course if somebody was laying on the side of the road dying I'd stop and help them. I'm good, I'm a good neighbor. Somebody dying on the side of the road I'm going to pull over and I'm going to help them maybe. If it's not too dark and there's not too much traffic." And so that's great. What are you going to do with the other 69 years, 364 days and 23 hours of your life besides the one time that you see somebody dying on the side of the road? What about the rest of your life, okay? So that shot down my first objection. "Okay Jesus - that's not a good one."

Here's my second one. Here's my second twist on it - see if you feel this way too. "Well of course I would never be prejudiced against anybody? I mean everybody's my neighbor, I don't have ill will towards anybody. I'll be a neighbor to everybody. Everybody's my neighbor." You know what I found out? When you think everybody's your neighbor, guess who's your neighbor? Nobody is your neighbor. Absolutely nobody. So let me ask you the question? Who are you being neighborly to? Now I really want us to do something today, okay? So here's what I'm going to ask you to do. Reach into your bulletin and pull out your sermon notes for this message. You should have gotten a bulletin when you came in. You're going to need to see this visually. Reach in there and pull out your sermon notes and flip it over to the backside, and you will immediately notice a tic-tac-toe board in there, and I made this thing completely foolproof. Where it says "your name", write your name. Go ahead, put it in there. I think you can do that much. Put your name in there. So while you're putting your name in there here's what I'm wanting you to visualize. View the place in the middle of that group of nine boxes as the place where you reside, where you live. And the eight boxes that surround you are the eight closest people to you. The people who live in places that actually touch your property line. Three people across the street, two people on each side, and three people that live behind you if you live in a typical subdivision. What I want you to do is write the names of those people in those boxes. Do you know those people? Do you know those people? If you live in an apartment complex, maybe think of the three that live above you, the two on the side, the three that live below you. If the three that live above you - like they're not neighbors because they make too much noise and so you want to go out further on the sides or whatever - who are the people that live, that God has actually placed near you that you cross paths with. If you'll just take a moment to engage them. Some of you may think of that as the cubicle in which you work and the eight cubicles around you or maybe as a student you think of yourself in first period or second period and the eight people that sit around you. Do you know their names? Do you know their stories? Do you know what they're afraid of? What their hopes are, what their dreams are? Do you know what they think about

when they lay their head on their pillow at night? Have you taken the time to ask the kinds of questions that would get to know them to know what needs they have, whether they're physical needs, whether they're emotional needs, whether they're social needs or whether they're spiritual needs. And I would commend to you, knowing their spiritual needs is a reflection of your relationship with Jesus. When we were in sin and struggling, God loved us enough to send his Son to earth to come and bring us the message of reconciliation, and the beauty of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming to the people that live and touch your life. Have you been neighborly enough to them to ensure that you know where they're at spiritually and you've commended Jesus to them?

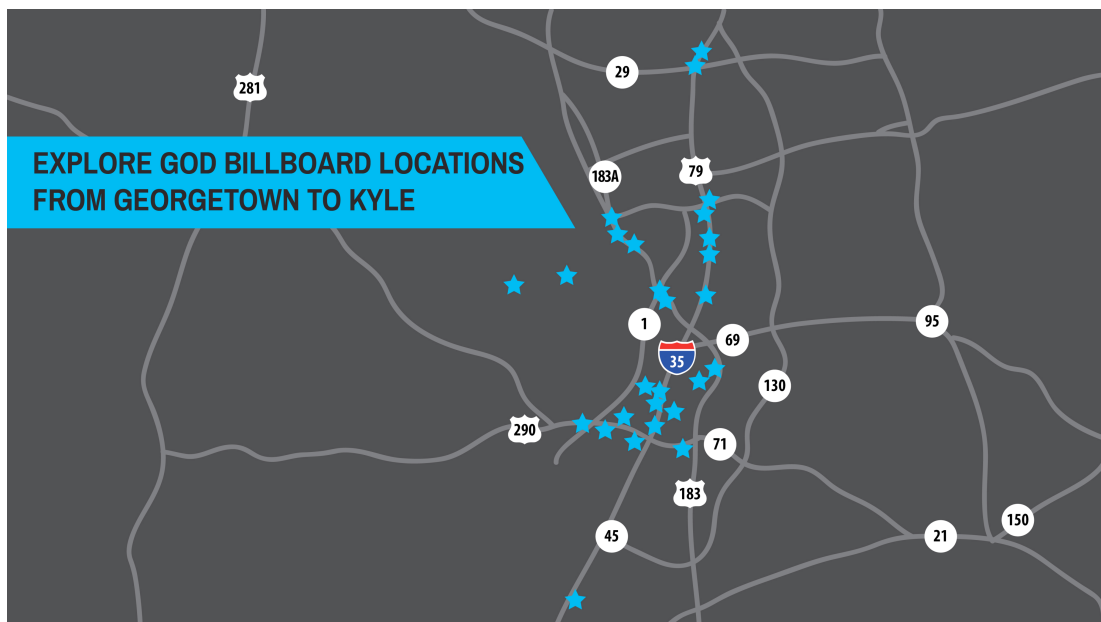
My wife and I got really aggressive about this a couple of years ago, and we started having our neighbors over for dinner. I mean think - I mean can you imagine, like "Hey what are you doing Tuesday night? Why don't you come over and we'll cook something for you." Wow it's a big deal, right? It's not that hard. Click or click (demonstrating turning off the remote on the t.v.) and invite them over. So we invited them over. We've had a wild time inviting our neighbors over for dinner. The first neighbor we had over, we found out they were Jewish and we fed them pork chops. (congregation laughs) They forgave us, okay? They've had us over to their house.

We've had people from all different kinds of lifestyles that you could possibly imagine, and we sit down and we ask them "Who are you people, where did you come from, what's your story, what makes you tick, what are you passionate about, what gets under your skin, what gets on your nerves," and during the course of them telling their story I do something like this. I say, "Well I bet you're wondering why I became a pastor?" And I'm sure that they're not, (congregation laughs), but I assume that since I listened to their story that they want to listen to my story, and I just tell them how Jesus Christ came into my life and how that changed me. I don't ask them to believe it, I just tell them, so now we have an openness. We've had spiritual conversations with every single person that we've had over to our house. From different ethnicities -- I remember one night we were sitting down with this couple and she tells the most wild story of her life. Like the most wild story - I can't tell you in mixed company. Wild story of her life, and then I do my thing, "I bet you wonder how I became a pastor", I tell my story, and in the midst of all of that I share how it's so rewarding to me to watch people who's lives are broken come to faith in Jesus Christ and find a body of believers that love them and begin to heal them. And as I'm telling her that story - telling that story to this couple, I watch the tears well up in her eyes and begin to run down her cheeks as she's listening to me talk. And the next morning at 7:30 she's in my driveway with a thank you note. "I want to thank you for having a meal with us, for inviting us into your

home,” before she went to work. Twelve hours later or 10 hours later – she wanted to make sure before the next day started that we were thanked for having her into our home.

We’ve had block parties, we’ve had all kinds of conversations. People are starting to invite us now back to their place, into their homes. I could spend hours this morning telling you all the cool things that God’s doing, and all we did was just start being neighbors to our neighbors. Start caring about them, talking to them.

Now here’s the really wild thing. Folks this is really wild. When we did our survey, 1.7 million people live in greater Austin. Six hundred thousand of them say yes to the question, “Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on the cross to pay for your sins and that by believing in him you can go to heaven when you die” – 600,000 people said “Yes they believe that,” which means 1.1 million said “No, they don’t believe that.” If the 600,000 who say they believe that would only be a neighbor to two people, just two. If you just picked two people to get to know them to find out what makes them tick. What their hopes are, what they’re dreams are, their fears are, what they believe, and begin to engage them in those conversations and talk to them about God and talk to them about Jesus. If everybody just picked two people every single man, woman and child in greater Austin would have a friend who’s engaging them about the most important question, and that is “What do you understand about Jesus Christ?” We would all be exploring God with our neighbors, and so this Summer, this Fall, we’re doing something unprecedented in the history of the City of Austin. We’re doing a spiritual awareness campaign called Explore God. I want to bring it to your attention, also in your bulletin you have a little card that looks like this (holds up a card). Let me give you an update on where we



are with Explore God. Currently we have over 300 churches that have committed to participate. So one-third of the churches in greater Austin have signed up to be part of this Explore God. Starting this week, in fact tomorrow, most of the billboards are going to begin to go up in the city, and so we have a map up here - 28 locations, 28 billboards that will be on the major thoroughfares, and you'll see the text of these billboards - we're going to scroll through there so you can see the text of what people that are driving up and down the road are going to begin to see as they are driving up and down the road. At the same time we're going to be launching a series of radio commercials, T.V. spots, t-shirts, bumper stickers, social media, trying to get people in the city to ask the question, "What does it mean to Explore God,"



engaging those 60 plus percent of the people to get them talking about this. At the same time with the 300 churches we've got about 200,000 believers that if each of you will get engaged in simply having conversations, we'll have the largest spiritual conversation that's ever taken place in the history of our city.

Won't You Be My Neighbor
Tim Hawks, HCBC Lead Pastor
July 7, 2013





We're encouraging you to go through a basic training to be prepared. In other words, tomorrow - probably not tomorrow, they'll go up probably Tuesday and Wednesday. Wednesday of this week you may run into somebody who says, "Hey want's all this stuff about Explore God" and you're either going to be prepared to get into a conversation with them or you're not going to be prepared. So far 3,200 of you have already gone through the training. About 2,500 more need to. How do I do that? There's a link on here and you can do it at home on your own tablet. So you don't have to go anyplace to get trained, but I want you to get trained.

Final thing I want you to consider is this. In September, starting September 8th we're going to preach seven messages on the seven big topics of Explore God. You'll find those topics on the backside of that sheet. At the same time we have small group material that is digitally based that actually helps get conversations started around these seven topics, and here's what we would like you to do. We would like you to begin to pray about friends, family members, co-workers, people that you hang out with, inviting them to come to your home or in your conference table at work or in a Starbucks, or if you're a student at school at the cafeteria at school. Wherever you can flip up your computer screen, or sit around your living room table and put this into your big screen and begin to engage those people in Explore God conversations. You don't have to convert them, you just converse with them. What my prayer is that about 500 of you would actually host your own discussion group, and the training for

how to host that discussion group is also on here where you can get that and look at it. Do it on your own. We'll give you opportunities to get trained here, but think about what would happen in our city if 200,000 believers invited four or five of the people that are their friends into a seven week conversation, whether they ever came to church or not is irrelevant. Seven weeks of talking with another Christian and some of their friends about God. That would transform our city. We would move from a city where having conversations about faith and about God and about life and about eternity and about Jesus, that those conversations would go from being rare to being normal. Non-believers would begin to understand that you can actually talk to Christians and they don't get in your face and yell at you. And Christians would begin to understand that if you treat people with respect they'll tell you their deepest secrets. They'll open up and share with you all kinds of things because the Holy Spirit is already working in their lives. And all you have to do is be the catalyst that engages.

So my question today is: What kind of neighbor are you? Love the Lord your God with all of you. Love your neighbor as you. Aren't you glad somebody cared enough to get the gospel to you. Just pick four or five people and get the gospel to them this Summer or this Fall.

Let's bow our heads for prayer. Father in heaven it is awesome what you are doing in our city. The unity of the leadership of our city, the pastors coming together at this level is just unprecedented, but we know the pastors do not have what it takes to reach the people in this city. It requires each person each member, and I am so glad to be pastor of Hill Country Bible Church because the folks you've given this church are a hearty stock, people that want to obey, that want to do your will. Father may we as a church lead the way. May we engage people and make conversations, start to change the trajectory of our lives and the lives of the people around us. Father do an incredible work. We call upon your spirit. Move. Jesus Christ reveal yourself in power and may the Good News take root in our neighborhoods, in our schools, and our places of work. We pray this in the powerful name, Jesus Christ. Amen.