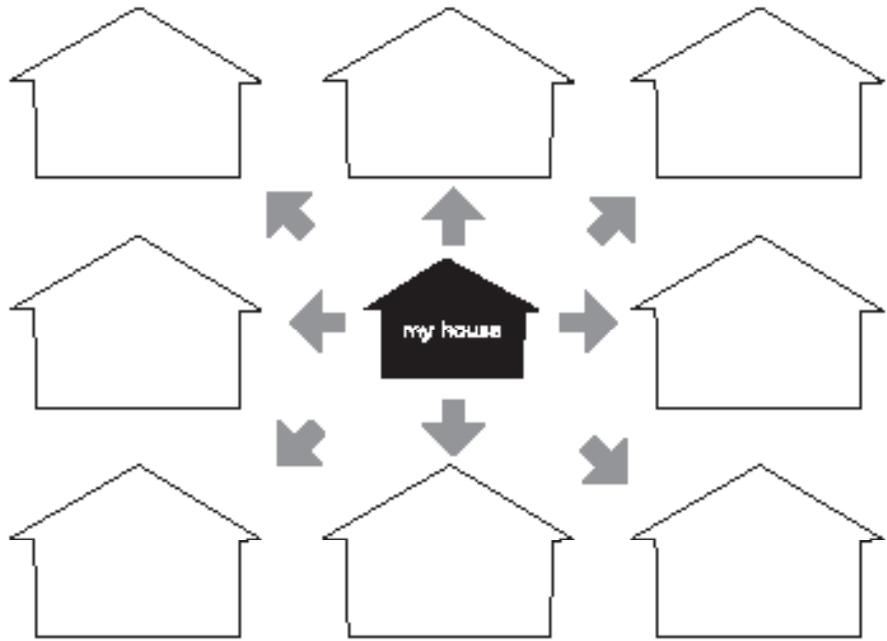


who's my neighbor?



getting to know the **people next door**

WHAT PEOPLE ARE REALLY THINKING WHEN THEY INVITE YOU TO CHURCH

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In the new era of “The Pope Francis Effect”, and people of all walks coming out for the release of Pastor Saeed Abedini, a lot of previously shy Christians are feeling more confident stepping up and out, and inviting you to church.

Which can be really annoying when you have zero interest in going to church, maybe that’s why you’re reading this. You may even be reading this thinking some version of “Anyone who would believe in some all-powerful man, who watches every little thing that every single person does, telling us to love each other, while he lets whole nations suffer from starvation and genocide, is out of their mind.” That’s what I used to think.

But I don’t anymore.

Just over two years ago, I picked up a free bible, I had read it before but, this time, almost instantly, in a wave of emotions and realizations and revelations and a wide variety of indescribable sensations, I became a Christian. It happened. It was not deliberate and it was not a choice. It was what I thought never happened to anyone, it was what I had been so sure did not exist the way any of these nut jobs described it, but I’ll be damned (pun intended) if it didn’t happen to me. I got saved.

In any movie centered around a coming of age love triangle, the title character will ask “Dad, how did you know you loved mom?” or, if our lead is female, “Mom, how did you know you loved dad?” and whether mom or dad are answering, the answer is always the same, “I just knew.”

It was like that. I just knew.

That’s what they want for you. That’s what the person that has sent you countless emails and texts about next Sunday, or called you every Saturday night asking to pick you up in the morning, wants for you. Every card from your grandma with bible passages written on it means she wants this for you. Every flyer from your neighbor, or old high school friend, about another church event means they want this for you. Every invitation to church is an “I love you and I want this indescribable love, peace, and joy for you because I genuinely care about you.”

The people that invite you to church are just like that friend that insists that you try the new Puerto Rican restaurant downtown, they have experienced something amazing and they want it for you too. It’s like that, but on almighty steroids. When a friend or a kindly stranger, a relative or a playgroup parent, says “Hey, why don’t you come to church with me on Sunday?” what they mean is “I love you so much, I cannot describe what I know

you can get from this because I can't even put into words what it has done for me." We understand that when you live in a world of sneaky advertising and suspicious sales scams, this sounds like just another one. But, it isn't.

On behalf of Christians everywhere, I would like you to know that we really, just wholeheartedly, love you. And, we want to share this infinite and ultimate love and acceptance with you. Whoever you are, whoever you love, and whoever you see yourself as or becoming or voting for, we love you. We want you to know Christ loves you, that's why we do that thing that used to annoy me so much and we remind you (and each other) in every way possible, through music and bumper stickers and even, well-intentioned but misguided, "Jesus Saves" graffiti. We apologize, collectively, for anyone who may have hurt you or wounded you in the name of a God they obviously needed more time getting to know, they had no right to do that, and we pray for the healing of those wounds.

And, yes, we would like to invite you to church.

[Used with permission]