

\*Disclaimer: this message will be experienced differently depending on how you define love and hate.

Love does not include complete access with no boundaries, lack of accountability, excusing behaviors, and turning a blind eye. This can be an act of hatred towards those who are oppressed, and a hatred towards ourselves.

I define love as seeing “that of God in everyone” and treating everyone with some level of dignity and humanity, while hatred is wishing ill will and malice, and in some cases, doing nothing.

John 15:12-17

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from My Father. You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

A couple of weeks ago my best friend asked me, “Are Quakers allowed to hate?”

As with any question that starts with “do Quakers believe...?” or “what is the Quaker stance on...?” these questions bring immediate overwhelm on how to answer or where to start. Quakers have a vastly diverse set of beliefs that at times, it can be hard to define what a Quaker is. So, when someone asks me what a Quaker is “allowed” to do, I’m hesitant to give a definitive answer on almost anything.

My mind went in many directions as I was trying to solve what may be unsolvable. God hates hands that shed innocent blood, as laid out in Proverbs 6. Ecclesiastes says there is a time to hate, what does that mean and when is that time? Yet Jesus talks over and over again about loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you.

After a brief moment of absence, I came back to my best friend and stated that I finally had the answer to her question.

“No. At least this Quaker isn’t.”

And when I went to write this message, I started wrestling with the question again. Certainly, I feel hatred at times, which is a normal human emotion of intense dislike for someone. The Bible says not to feel anxious about anything, but instead to pray and express gratitude. One cannot

go through life without any anxiety, and some anxiety is even healthy if we are attuned to what it is telling us. A better question may be to ask not what one is “allowed”, but how one would choose to handle their thoughts and feelings according to their beliefs. I can feel hatred and choose to act in love intentionally and for a purpose.

Romans 12:14-21:

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals over their heads.” Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.”

God asks of me to love my enemies. I want to focus less on how I can feel justified in hating someone and focus more on how to love who I perceive is unlovable, and how I can see that of God in each person.

It is less about what is or isn't allowed, and more about what I will or will not do. One is about skirting around the bare minimum without a heart transformation, the other is a call to act or refrain from acting from a place of alignment.

“God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, ‘I love God’ and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.” -1 John 4:16-21

When I have listened to various discussions about what Quakers believe, there is diversity within those beliefs, yet the concept of “that of God in everyone” is unanimous, even if God is referred to in other terms. We are called to see humanity and dignity in all, *even towards those who dehumanize others.*

Sarah Cronk, a Quaker author, stated, “We are called to obedient love even though we may not be feeling very loving. Often it is through the performance of loving acts that loving feelings can be built up in us. We may start with small, perhaps very tiny steps. It is only as we begin to allow Christ’s love to act in and through us that it can become a part of us.”

This year’s Super Bowl halftime show was acknowledged as bringing a message about love, unity and inclusivity. A real couple got married. The artist gave away his grammy to a 5-year-old boy. “Together, we are America” was written on the football, with various flags representing different countries that make up America. A giant sign in the background said, “The Only Thing More Powerful than Hate is Love”. It was a love letter to his home: Puerto Rico; it was a form of peaceful resistance, simply by modeling something different from the current climate of state-sanctioned violence, particularly against our brown and immigrant neighbors.

Love is here. While the hatred and violence persist, so does falling in love, getting married, dancing in the streets, spending quality time with family.

Yet for some people, that will be replaced by being ripped out of their loved ones’ arms, cancelled wedding plans, being crammed in a cell where there is no room for dancing, and 5-year-olds sitting alone on a concrete floor instead of watching TV on the couch with their families.

We are called to resist hatred with love.

#### *Queries:*

What is your hatred doing to resist our current climate of rampant emotional, physical and spiritual violence? Your love? Your complacency?

When have you witnessed the power of love?

Why is love more powerful than hate?