

## FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

by Herb Montgomery  
Director | Speaker



May they be blotted out of the book of life; And may they not be recorded with the righteous (Psalms 69:28).

At Renewed Heart Ministries we offer a series of presentations on the book of Revelation that we present from time to time, and there are two verses that have been bumping together as they roll around in my head and heart. These

two verses are found in chapter 13 and 17, respectively, where it speaks of a book, a lamb, and something taking place from the foundation of the world. It is quite evident to me that Christ is the Lamb *slain* from the foundation of the world, but the Greek language also lends itself to another possible reality as well. And I'm walking gently here. I'm only saying it's a possibility. The Greek implies that it may very well be that the Book of Life was also written from the foundation of the world as well. If this were true, the implications would be profound!

First, the Bible elsewhere speaks of books about us being written before we truly ever exist.

“Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written/The days that were ordained *for me*, When as yet there was not one of them” (Psalms 139:16).

You have one of two options with verses like this. Either all the events of our lives are pre-ordained in a non-alterable nature, and thus we are simply robots, or, God has pre-ordained us for spectacular things, even before we are born, but He gives us the choice whether to follow what He has ordained for us, or to let us write our own book, to follow our own way. I know verses like this exist, but none of them say that they are ordained in a non-alterable way. We can alter them! God has ordained all people to be saved, in fact, but we can resist that because of free will and go our own way.

But, when it comes to the Book of Life, it is interesting to me that there is not one verse in the Bible about names being added to the Book of Life, but every one of them is solely about names being removed.

“He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the Book of Life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (Revelation 3:5).

“But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!” (Exodus 32:32).

The implication of this is *profound!* It is possible that, by virtue of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, every person's name has been written in the Book of Life from *the foundation of the world* as well. God has ordained all to have life! But he also allows us to take our names out of the book if we should so choose.

The verse quoted this week (Psalms 69:28) is David's prayer that the wicked's names be blotted out and not remain there with those of the righteous! How did the wicked's names get into the Book of Life to begin with?

Pay close attention to what the following verses say.

For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, *but that the world might be saved* through Him (John 3:17, emphasis added).

For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the *Savior of all men, especially of believers* (1Timothy 4:10, emphasis added).

Did Jesus save the world? Is He truly the Savior of all? And could He especially be the Savior of the believers because they simply accept Him as their Savior, receiving the gift of salvation rather than throwing it away by resisting the abounding grace of our God?

What the judgment will reveal—it may very well be—is that salvation, full and free, was given to every man, woman and child, and that those who are lost are in that position because they, like Esau, have deliberately thrown away their birth-right possession.

Something to think about.

I wish you God's best. †

### Thoughts to Ponder

“The shortness of time is frequently urged as an incentive for seeking righteousness and making Christ our friend. This should not be the great motive with us; for it savours of selfishness. Is it necessary that the terrors of the day of God should be held before us, that we may be compelled to right action through fear? It ought not to be so. Jesus is attractive. He is full of love, mercy, and compassion. He proposes to be our friend, to walk with us through all the rough pathways of life.”

– White, *Bible Echo*, June 25, 1894 par. 7



# MINISTRY UPDATE

On March 20 and 21 of this year, I was privileged to be a part, once again, of another Good News Tour. I truly love the people who organize this event each year. They are some of the most remarkable people I have met so far in my travels. One such person I was privileged to meet this time was Dr. Gregory Boyd, pastor of the Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minnesota and professor at Bethel University.

Greg presented three talks during the weekend: his own journey out of atheism into faith, the reasons behind his belief in the historical validity of the Gospels, and the clearest and most moving presentation I have ever witnessed on what it truly means to be a follower of Christ.

There was one phrase that, seven days later, I still have echoing over and over in my head:

“Above all . . . LOVE!” (1 Peter 4:8)

That means above everything. Above all else.

Paul put it this way:

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

Especially in the area of religion, we are too often overly concerned about being right, rather than being Godly. God is Love (1 John 4:8). This is the truest “mark” by which to know that we really are following the truth: “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Jesus himself also said to the Pharisees of His day, “If God were your Father, you would love . . .” (John 8:42). John the beloved wrote, “Let us love one another . . . everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:7-8).

I’d like to share the opening passage from the Message Bible as well:

“Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. **Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it.** Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God’s words; if help, let it be God’s hearty help. That way, God’s bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and he’ll get all the credit as the One mighty in everything—encores to the end of time. Oh, yes!” (1 Peter 4:7-11, The Message)

How, then, is this love to be found in us? Only by love is love awakened. We only love “because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Is it the mandate to “above all” love something that you find your own heart gravitating toward? Then I lift up to you the greatest revelation of love ever manifested before human eyes—the cross of Christ. When His sacrifice

is truly understood in the hearts of those who claim to be His followers, then His love, in our treatment of all with whom we come into contact, will be manifested among His followers as well.

The end of all things is at hand! May we not only grasp the love that’s in God’s heart toward us, but may we also, ABOVE ALL... Love!

Also I thought I would include for you what Greg himself wrote; being a Baptist Pastor, his experience was preaching the Gospel alongside Seventh-day Adventist brothers and sisters in Christ. I pray you’ll find it as inspiring as I did.



## The Good News Tour– March 24th, 2009

*This last weekend I was in Vancouver, Canada participating in The Good News Tour. This is a traveling conference that celebrates, proclaims and defends the beautiful character of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Some of you might recall the controversial poster I talked a lot about last year which depicts Jesus washing the feet of world leaders, including Osama Bin Ladin. The poster was created by Lars Justinen, and The Good News Tour is the ministry that sponsored it. (You can view and purchase the poster here. Incidentally, I feature the poster in chapter 7 of my new book, The Myth of a Christian Religion, which will be available in a couple of weeks).*

*Anyway, I had an absolute blast at this conference. The folks who sponsor The Good News Tour really get – I mean really get – the unfathomable beauty of God’s love. It’s the central passion of their life and it permeates the very fabric of their being. I’ve rarely heard the magnificence of God’s perfect love presented so profoundly. It’s always refreshing to be around folks like this.*

*I had fun presenting three messages focusing on Jesus as the definitive revelation of God and how replicating Christ’s self-sacrificial love is the distinguishing mark of a Jesus-follower. But I was especially blessed by the passionate and insightful messages delivered by others.*

*Brad Cole gave an outstanding talk entitled “Scary God or Scary People?” which attempted to reconcile the God of the Old Testament with the God revealed in Jesus. It was one of the most insightful explorations of this topic I’ve ever heard. Herb Montgomery, founder of Renewed Heart Ministries, gave several passionate talks on the character of God and how to reconcile God’s love with the problem of evil. This young man has a remarkable ability to communicate very complex concepts in a clear and compelling way. For example, he presented the complex variable theodicy I spend several hundred pages developing in *Satan and the Problem of Evil* in a five-minute illustration, and it landed! I was blown away. And Marco Belmonte, founder of Heavenly Sanctuary, which sponsors The Good News Tour, gave a passionate (and sometimes hilarious) testimony about how the revelation of God’s love transformed this former drug addict into a passionate disciple of Jesus. The entire conference was shrouded in God’s love and I was honored to be a part of it.*

*One last word: I have to confess that I have always tended to associate Seventh-day Adventists with legalism. Well, I hereby publicly repent of this assumption. Each of the presenters in this conference, along with the church that sponsored it (and the wonderful pastor of this church, Manuel Silva) are members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and believe me, these folks are as free of legalism as anyone could possibly*



be! In fact, one of the objectives of The Good News Tour is to bring the Good News of God's transforming love to Seventh-day Adventists and everyone else who may be entrapped in legalism.

This just goes to show how dumb our labels and stereotypes are.

I'd like to thank Brad Cole and The Good News Tour for inviting me to be part of the Vancouver conference and for blessing my socks off this weekend.

Peace,  
Greg

### **Visalia SDA Church– Visalia, CA**

Very rarely am I as impressed with a church as I was with this one. What impressed me so much was the rich cultural diversity I found in the Visalia Seventh-day Adventist church. This is a bi-lingual church and the members pull it off beautifully.

I spent a week in Visalia, California, giving seven presentations. Night after night found us penetrating deeper into the matchless grace of a God whom I'm convinced has been misunderstood by and misrepresented to the masses. We began with the vital importance of having an accurate Biblical understanding of God and His character of Love. We then moved on to learn how to harmonize the Bible's claim that God is love with the immense amount of continuous suffering and what appears to be arbitrary intervention and help from the Divine. Next, we compared all we had looked at with the Cross of Calvary, which I consider still to be the clearest revelation of the type of being our God truly is, ever to be shown to the universe. We closed the week with Paul's words to the Believers in Ephesus, to be imitators of God and live the life of love (Ephesians 5:1).

What made these presentations an additional blessing was the high quality of translation into Spanish with which these presentations were given. These presentations were also recorded and may very well be Renewed Heart Ministries' first materials available in Spanish. Keep an eye out for these in the near future.

### **Pine Hills Academy– Auburn, CA April 13-17, 2009**

Very rarely do I run into a group of young people as "with it" as those in this student body. Many remarked what a blessing our studies were during this week, but I can honestly say, the blessing was largely mine. I had the privilege of speaking to all grades, from kindergarten through senior in high school. And a wide spectrum of participants that is!

During our time together for this Academy's spring week-of-prayer, we explored some very heavy subjects, as well as the questions that always surface regarding those subjects and the puzzling harmony of reconciling common conclusions with the character of a God who is Love. We didn't settle for pat answers. We kept searching. And what amazed me was not just the students' ability to think deeply, but also their capacity for maintaining focus long enough to come up with some truly original and creative thoughts on the subjects.

One afternoon, after the formal presentation itself was over, we spent about half an hour in a circle discussing the challenge of reconciling the seemingly arbitrary nature of divine intervention in human suffering. And as emotionally charged as that discussion was, we experienced new insights and were all moved deeply at how truly loving our God really is.

The week ended for many with a powerful encounter with the cross. Decisions were made for both time and eternity. And many saw God's heart, not just for the first time, but also at deeper level than ever before. Praise be to Him who did not count heaven itself

a place to be desired while we were left outside.

I will be heading back to this Academy next spring for graduation as well. Please keep these students in your prayers. God is doing great things at Pine Hills Adventist Academy.

### **Lakeport SDA Church– Lakeport, CA**

Ten days on the water. Sounds like vacation to most, but for RHM, it was another opportunity to reach out to a community around one of our local churches. I received an invitation to come and hold an evangelistic series, but it was made quite clear that this little church was not looking for something traditional. I thought, "No problem! You've contacted the right ministry." Little did I know the blessings that would follow. To date, this is the largest attended series we have held as a ministry. The returns on our marketing and advertising were far above average. It was as if God was moving in this little community, things were ripe, and it was time to do something.

I met many precious people from this little town. One such person was a dear little lady who ran the local public broadcast radio station. We did an hour-long interview on the radio about the series, who and what God really is, and the dynamics of the spiritual journey of discovering God that we are all on, whether we recognize it or not.

Night after night, the attendance grew until that last Saturday morning, when the congregation was more than quadruple its regular attendance. Many encountered God and the love He has for them for the very first time. Others experienced it in a way that they never had before. God's heart was seen and lives were changed.

Please keep this little church in your prayers as they endeavor to follow up the work that God has begun in this small lake side community.



### **Shasta Lake Bible Fellowship– Redding, CA**

I encountered an amazing experience this past weekend, which I spent with the members of the Shasta Lake Bible Fellowship. Their story is amazing. This group of laypeople owns a facility whose construction was accomplished through a string of miracles. When the last nail was driven, they had fully paid for the building. But what makes this group special is that its congregation is not small. About 75% of its regular attendance is comprised of non-members from the community who, even though they are not members, feel a strong sense of belonging. This is a "fellowship," and although Bible studies continue as folks transition into membership, all are welcome and all belong; this is their fellowship. You feel a strong sense of love, warmth, and acceptance the moment you walk in the door, and this sense presents a stronger welcome than the specific greetings from individuals. It is the result of a combination of things, a synergy in which the sum of the parts far outweighs the individual contributions. In a word, it's love, in action.

We covered four topics that are foundational for Renewed Heart Ministries. These topics examine issues that every person needs to understand about the Gospel in these closing moments of earth's history. The first topic is the importance of our focus on understanding His character rather than our behavioral or intellectual achievements. The second topic addresses why bad things happen to people if God loves them. The third topic is the intrinsic nature of reality, in contrast to the religiously imposed paradigm through which most Christians relate to God. The fourth topic explores the Cross, including what it says to us about the

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definition of love and whether we have the courage to believe that the God of the universe truly is that type of love.

It was a powerful weekend, filled with many life-changing encounters with the divine heart, which many have not yet seen. Testimonies continue to pour in about the incredible miracles that God has accomplished for this fellowship. Praise be to His extravagant love, His amazing grace, and the intimate friendship that He has given to us all. †



**Announcing a new book by Herb Montgomery from Autumn House Publishers, release date: December 15, 2009.**

Thought we'd share the introduction to the book with you:

*We are commissioned by the apostle Paul himself in his letter to the believers in Ephesus,*

*"Therefore be imitators of God... and walk in love..." (Ephesians 5:1,2 NASB) The Today's English Version (TEV) translates Paul's words, "You must try to be like him. Your life must be controlled by love." The Revised English Bible (REB) exhorts us to, "Live in love." Eugene Peterson (The Message) paraphrases Paul's words, "Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that."*

*This is what life is truly all about.*

*Today, loving relationships seem to be the weakest perceived quality of those who claim to be "His" people. We have become more concerned with being correct than godly, right rather than righteous. Intellectually and behaviorally correct, while love, both in our understanding of God and as the principle by which we relate to those around us, has been largely left by the wayside.*

*I believe this is largely because we have failed, not in our treatment of others, but in our own perception, our own heart level understanding, of what truly it means that God Is love. The root of both our misplaced spiritual zeal, or our religious malaise is that deep within our hearts,*

*silently and subtly we have embraced, even unknowingly, a wrong picture of God.*

*God is shining in our hearts. (2 Cor 4:6) In hopes that we will understand with our hearts. (Isaiah 6:10) John states that, "Everyone who loves...knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." (1 John 4:7,8 NASB) This is how Jesus stated we would be able to tell who is really God's and who has yet to truly see Him. (John 13:35) How we define God's love, and how that love is reflected by us to those around us, will be the defining identity that sets His people apart from all others in the end. (1 Peter 4:7,8) Yet, how can we imitate that which we do not know or understand? What does it mean to truly believe that God is love? What is love? What does it look like? Once we find it, do we have the courage to truly believe that THAT is what the God of this universe is?*

*It is to this aim, 1) that God's character may be truly encountered by you, 2) that the revelation of Himself would leave, not only you, but He Himself as well, with a sense of being over-joyed and a feeling of being over-loved, and 3) that the above questions may truly and sincerely be answered, that the following pages are dedicated. His desire is not as much to be in your heart, as that you would see, and believe, how deeply you are in His. I invite you then, dear reader, with this in mind, into a new world: A world of Extravagant Love, Amazing Grace, and an Intimate Friendship with the most incredible being in existence. It is not enough to know He is love, He would have us understand what that really means. I wish you His best in what is about to follow. May the truths within this small volume you are holding usher you from darkness, once and for all, into His marvelous light.*

**- Herb Montgomery**

## Calendar

**July 3-11, 2009**

Calgary Mountain View SDA Church  
Calgary, AB Canada  
403.239.1857

**July 24-25, 2009**

Novato SDA Church  
Novato, CA  
415.897.2600

**July 27-August 1, 2009**

Wells Fargo Center  
Santa Rosa, CA  
707.292.6543

**August 2-8, 2009**

Pacific Union College -  
Korean Camp Meeting  
Angwin, CA  
916.989.9540

**September 11-12, 2009**

Coquille SDA Church  
Coquille, OR  
541.396.3890

**September 18-19, 2009**

Orangevale SDA Church  
Orangevale, CA  
916.967.2838

**September 25-26, 2009**

Southwest SDA Church  
Orland Park, IL  
708.514.5723

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Renewed Heart Ministries  
P.O. Box 1211  
Lewisburg, WV 24901

Contributions can also be made online at:

[www.renewedheartministries.com](http://www.renewedheartministries.com)

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