



# Awakenings

*"Only by love is love awakened."*

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## *The Peace Teachings of Jesus*

by Herb Montgomery

**"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you . . . You have heard that it was said, 'Love your friends, hate your enemies.' But now I tell you: love your enemies . . ." — Jesus (Matthew 5.38-48)**



**There was a time in my life when I genuinely felt that Jesus' teachings on nonviolence were more tangential. But I must confess, I was wrong. Once embraced, I began to see that Christ's teachings on nonviolence are more central to the picture of God that Jesus came to reveal than I could possibly have had explained to me or that I could have understood from outside the topic. Yet it's a catch 22 as well. Embracing non-violence is not only central to our own understanding of God's character, but it's *dependent* upon your picture of God as well. But again, once embraced, it unlocks every other topic related to a Christocentric picture of the Father. (See John 14.9; from your Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, all the way down to eschatology and every thing in between.)**

The more I begin to understand what Jesus really was all about, and the kind of God He represented the Father to be, it would seem to me that in Western Americanized Christianity, we have lost our way, and maybe even forgotten what the road we are supposed to be on even looks like.

Ever since Jesus spoke the above words two millennia ago, followers and non-followers alike have read these words and felt that Jesus was pretty clear. ("The only people on earth who do not see Christ and his teachings as nonviolent are Christians." – Gandhi) Sometimes Jesus speaks in parables and we have to figure it out. But this teaching was different. Jesus speaks plainly here, gives real life applications and then lives a life demonstrating exactly what He means, all the way down to the Cross itself. How did we get from the clear teaching of Jesus to today where we, as Christians in America, celebrate July 4th as a Christian holiday, fly American Flags in our churches, identify ourselves as Americans first and Christians second (rather than strangers, foreigners, ambassadors for a Kingdom that is not of this world), and to John Hagee's now famous prayer that God would, in the Name of Jesus, lead this country in our wars and that the angels of heaven would go before American troops against "our" enemies. How did we get here?

Today we have a series of reasons and justifications that circumvent our application of these words in their truest meaning. In our application we say that Jesus teaching on this subject is only for

certain groups, certain time periods, or certain cultural circumstances. But the fact that Jesus taught the way of peace is obvious to everybody. Christians today just find unique ways to circumvent its application to our lives.

Today we have gone from a rule with no exceptions (this is how the first three hundred years of Christian history interpreted Jesus teaching), to believing that there were certain

exceptions to Jesus' teaching, then from exceptions being admitted to exceptions being embraced. Today, exceptions are now lived by more than the rule. The exceptions are seen as the rule and the teachings of Jesus are seen as the exception. How did this happen?

This Article is actually the first installment of a series of e-Sights and Podcasts on our website on this topic. This topic could not be more important right now. Your understanding on this topic, I will freely admit, is deeply determined by whether your picture of God looks like Jesus or something else. Most of the time, Renewed Heart Ministries is a ministry with a goal of humbly serving the world with a call to non-followers of Jesus to consider the radical, self-sacrificial, other-centered teachings of Jesus. But in this series, we are not calling those who are non-followers to consider the teachings of Jesus. We are calling those who claim to follow Jesus to take a serious look at the actual teachings of Jesus. This series is focused uniquely toward "Christians," asking them to change the direction of their lives and begin following Jesus. It's a call to *Christians* to *repent*. It transcends denominations and reaches to the central core of what, for the first three hundred years of Christianity, it meant to be a follower of "the way." At its heart, the Kingdom was about following the way of peace. Jesus teachings will challenge us to our core, but if we can endure the tension to get to the other side, our picture of God will be forever, radically changed. Again, I will freely admit, Jesus' teaching on this subject is the most challenging of all his teachings. Just by our focus on these teachings, we as a ministry, have already seen significant financial support of our ministry begin to walk away. I feel deeply concerned over this. But RHM is in Abba's hands. And we are already seeing others step forward who want to support a ministry that take Jesus' teachings and Jesus' presentation of the character of our Father seriously. For those who do partner with RHM, I want to say again, thank you. It is your support that makes what we do around the world possible.

I also want to say before we move any further with this topic, that I am fully aware of supporters and followers of Renewed Heart

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Ministries that are wonderful Christians who have a different opinion on this. These are Christians that are committed to scripture, who love God, who subscribe to the “Justified Violence Theory” and who do not align with Renewed Heart Ministries teaching on this. Some of them are in law enforcement, in the military service currently, or work in different governmental roles. I’m so glad you are journeying with me in this series. One of the things we at Renewed Heart Ministries passionately believe is that it is possible to separate agreement and acceptance. We can disagree and yet disagree as brothers and sisters, friends, not viewing each other as outsiders, but both as insiders, not as enemies, but as family, understanding that we accept each other even though we don’t agree. It would be easier for you to find another ministry that always agrees with you and that doesn’t stretch you and pull you out of your comfort zone. But the fact that you and I are friends and that we consider each other as deeply committed Christians and that you are even a part of what RHM does in this world is a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate what we DO agree Jesus’ Kingdom is all about. And so in this series, we are going to be looking at this subject as family, not as an effort to find out who the real Christian is and who is the heretic. But as Christians who are centered on Christ, founded on scripture, and secure and confident in our love and consideration of each other.

Second, I want to make this very clear: Is it possible for someone who embraces the peace teachings of Jesus to honor a non-pacifist? Absolutely! This is one of the major differences between Christian pacifism and what some have called secular or “hippy” pacifism (This is NOT the “hell no we won’t go” movement of the 60’s). I have friends who are deeply committed Christians who are, again, in military service or in law enforcement and I can honor them even though I may hold a different position than them. Let me explain. We both agree that there are causes worth dying or risking our lives for. And I can honor them in this. I can honor those in military service or law enforcement that continually put their life at risk for a cause in which they believe. This is honorable. I may disagree on whether or not it’s moral to kill for a cause, but we both DO agree on whether or not we should be willing to die for a cause, and this is deeply honorable. So let me say from the beginning that those of you who are in the military and law enforcement, if you are doing this from your best understanding of Scripture and according to your conscience, I deeply honor you and the passion in which you hold your beliefs, to the point of being willing to die for what you believe. This level of commitment to what you believe is rare among most of American Christians in today’s comfort-based, consumer-driven Christianity. I honor YOU in this. For this, I can say, you are my heroes. Is it possible to do this and disagree? I believe it is.

Third, Jesus’ teaching on pacifism is not to be confused with “passive-ism.” It’s not a do-nothing, let others pay the price, inactive, excuse to just run away and be a coward. (See Part 3 of the series on RHM’s Website for more detailed examples of this.) Pacifism holds the same root as “to pacify.” It comes from the Latin word *pax* which means “peace.” Pacifism is to bring peace or reconciliation. But it’s not peace by any means. It is not a goal to be reached by any means necessary. It’s peace by peaceful means. It’s a lifestyle, a disposition, attitude and way of life where the means and the ends are aligned. This contrast we can see modeled in the different methods used by the Muslim activist Malcom X and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights movement in the US. King spoke of the ends being embedded in the means so that the means themselves

reflect the ends toward which we are working. So we do not choose the way of violence in order to obtain peace. The way of peace is exactly that; it’s both a way and a goal. To embrace pacifism simply means you seek to bring peace but by a means that reflects the goal. It is not a “do-nothing” passive-ism, it’s a willingness to lay down even your own life, if need be, to bring about peace. This is what Jesus so effectively demonstrated throughout His entire life. Love demands we respond to injustice and the violence of this world, but it also dictates the form in which that response should take. (It may be easiest for many who are unfamiliar with this topic to simply begin defining non-violence as simply non-lethal force, so as not to cut off the hope of restoring and redeeming each person involved.)

Today we have overwhelming evidence that the followers of Jesus were pacifists for the first three centuries. They held an unwavering commitment to non-violence. Today, the Christian church in America has become something that would be completely unrecognizable to early Christians. I want to share with you a series of statements from the early church. These statements that follow are NOT a random sampling of the majority position. They are the ONLY position held by the early church. There is not one record of a dissenting voice within Christian leadership on this point for the first three hundred years. Never has there been such unity of belief in Christian history as there was on this topic during these years. This is not the majority position; this is the only position, held unanimously without exception. Here is how the early church interpreted Jesus teaching on pacifism:

“We (Christians) no longer take up sword against nation, nor do we learn war any more, but we have become the children of peace.” -- Origin

“And shall the son of peace take part in the battle when it does not become him even to sue at law? And shall he apply the chain, and the prison, and the torture, and the punishment, who is not the avenger even of his own wrongs?” — Tertullian

“Anyone who has the power of the sword, or who is a civil magistrate wearing the purple, should desist, or he should be rejected.”— Hippolytus

“Rather, it is better to suffer wrong than to inflict it. We would rather shed our own blood than stain our hands and our conscience with that of another.” —Arnobius

“It makes no difference whether you put a man to death by word, or rather by the sword, since it is the act of putting to death itself which is prohibited.”—Arnobius

“When God forbids killing, he doesn’t just ban murder, which is not permitted under the law even; he is also recommending us not to do certain things which are treated as lawful among men . . . whether you kill a man with a sword or a word makes no difference, since killing itself is banned.”—Lactantius

We do not see the “Justified Violence Theory” (which is the dominant teaching in Christianity today on this topic) enter into Christian belief until Constantine, when Christians for the first time began to lay down the cross (non-violent, self-sacrificial love) and began picking up the sword. This change is what historians and scholars call the “Constantinian Shift,” where violence was embraced by those who claimed to follow Jesus for the very first time in history. And the rest is a bloody history that I personally believe, has brought untold damage to people’s picture of God. We are experiencing the backlash in our culture today.

“The Constantinian Shift amounted to a fundamental reorientation

in the relationship of church and world.” – John Howard Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*.

Constantine’s conversion might possibly be the most defining event in Western history, second only to the life of Jesus himself. When Church and State unite, historically, it has only ever ended in the Church becoming the State’s whore. (See Revelation 17) According to the early church, pacifism was not an optional issue, but the clearest indication that we were free from all nationalism and other forms of domination. Today, when America goes to war, Christians view America as “our” country and especially in some parts of the US, Christians become America’s war-time, loudest cheerleaders.

Today, we have a generation that has been raised in the wake of religiously motivated violence. (Such as September 11.) Originally, there would have been a stark difference in those who would have been willing to kill for their cause and those who were willing to be killed for their cause. Today, the world is ripe for a group of those who claim to follow Jesus, to not only be passionate about “preaching” the picture of God He came to reveal, but to embrace also the way Jesus taught us we would primarily reveal the truth of God’s character of Love to the world through embracing Jesus’ teaching on non-violence.

In this series that you can now find on line, we will be taking an honest look at what happened to the church with the conversion of Constantine. Then we will take a hard look at what the actual teachings of Jesus really were on this topic. We will then be addressing frequently asked questions on various topics that arise when it comes to applying Jesus teaching to our lives as modeled by Jesus himself.

These will include, but not be limited to:

- Hitler and the Allied Forces
- Someone Who Breaks Into Your Home
- Old Testament Violence Commanded By God
- Christians in Military or Law Enforcement (Romans 13)

Domestic Violence (Should I stay with him?)  
A Few Examples of Desperate New Testament Exegesis.

I want to encourage you to journey with me and not guess ahead of time how I will apply Jesus’ teaching to each to the questions above. Instead, let’s simply start with the teachings of Jesus and the early church and allow the answers to surface. I think you will be pleasantly surprised and deeply culturally challenged all at the same time.

Last, we will end this series with how to apply Jesus’ teachings in culturally relevant and meaningful ways that make sense to His followers today.

This is going to be a wonderful journey. If you are still with me even at the end of this first article, I affirm you. You are amazing! Stay with me. And whether we agree at the end of this series or not, whether you become a pacifist too, are reaffirmed in your pacifism, or whether or not you embrace more fully the theory of Justified Violence, once again, as family, we will at the very minimum understand more fully what we each believe and why. Whether you subscribe to Justified Violence or whether you are a Pacifist, we both agree that Jesus taught and modeled Pacifistic options as our first resort. We both agree that we should seek nonviolent creative options first. The only difference is that a Justified Violence theorist believes that as a last resort we can turn to violence as a means of bringing peace, even if it cost the life of our enemies. A pacifist simply stops one step short of this final option, even if it cost them their own life rather than the life of their enemies. Following Jesus means living a life where we become conduits of Jesus’ radical, other-centered, self-sacrificial love. I would simply add one more adjective—non-violent.

Whoever claims to live in him should live as Jesus did.”—1 John 2.6  
Keep living in the way of peace, living a life of radical love, and keep building the Kingdom.

*Herb*

## MINISTRY UPDATE

The following is taken from the news page on our website. For more up to date news on each event involving Herb and RHM, please see [www.renewedheartministries.com](http://www.renewedheartministries.com) and look under the “News” tab.

### Lake Junaluska, NC May 27–June 2, 2012

Each summer brings whirlwind tours of repeated travels, many times back to back. Today is my first day back home after being gone for nearly three weeks straight. And even though it was only three weeks, I feel like, for the Kingdom, there were enough memories made to fill up an entire year. When 2012 ends and someone asks me, “Herb, what was your favorite ministry memory of 2012?” I know already, it’s going to be Lake Junaluska on a Thursday morning.

I was in the main auditorium speaking to a group of about seven hundred-plus on the subject of God’s prevenient forgiveness. I was coming to the close of my presentation, building to the climax, but before I could get there, a gentleman in the back of the auditorium jumped to his feet and shouted at the top of his lungs, “Hallelujah! I’m free! Praise God, I’m free!” He kept shouting it over and over again. (You can hear it on the recording.) Everything came to

a screeching halt; all eyes became fixed on my new friend as he shouted to the rest of those in the room, “I’m finally FREE!” It was a beautiful moment for the Kingdom, for this man had just taken the first bite of the banquet feast. Then the whole audience broke out in loud applause. I so wish you could have been there.

Each morning, just before lunch, I spoke before the more traditional audience in the main auditorium. But each evening I had the distinct privilege of speaking to college students and young adults. I say this kind of tongue in cheek, because in all reality, the room was packed out each night not with only young adults, but also those more “young at heart” from the morning session. The material for the morning sessions was taken from my book *Finding the Father*, but in the evenings we were covering material from the new *The Jesus Dialogue* series on our website.

I found myself staying so late each evening, one night to the wee hours of the morning, answering questions and helping folks whose picture of God was experiencing an extreme makeover. I witnessed one miracle after another, and as I drove away when it was all finished, I could say with all confidence, surely this week the Kingdom was enlarged.

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## Ministry Update, continued from page 3

### The NEW Jesus Dialogue – South Lake Tahoe, CA June 8-16

I want to thank the church there in South Lake Tahoe for their passionate desire to reach out to their community with the message of Jesus and not simply reheat traditional evangelical Christian leftovers. I love your passion! This series was amazing. If you've ever been to that little church there, you'll know it's not very big. So they rented a seminar room at a local resort on the lake and we packed it out. We had a very good mix of people from all walks and life experiences. Some were familiar with "church" and had positive experiences, some were familiar with "church" but had very negative experiences, and some had no experience with "church" whatsoever. It was exciting.

Night after night, as we simply looked at the teachings of Jesus (in contrast to contemporary evangelical Christianity), the lights began to come on! Wheels began to turn. It was a revolution for many who attended, one paradigm shift after another. By the last weekend, in light of many confessions made during the meetings and a desire to start doing things differently (by church members and non-members alike; see the presentation *Where Do We Go From Here?*), we had a few who decided to risk coming to church. And before I left on Sunday, we even had one baptism there at the resort pool! I LOVED it!

The recordings of this series at South Lake Tahoe are up on the website now. You can listen to them under the updated *The Jesus Dialogue* series. It's my prayer that as you listen, you too will hear the "euangelion" proclaimed by Jesus . . . The Kingdom Has Come!

## Featured Presentation



It's July and for all our supporters in the United States (and Canada too, July 1), it's a month filled with flag waving and deep patriotism. Yet, could we be missing something? The early followers of Jesus saw themselves as "strangers", "sojourners" here, "citizens" of a nation (or Kingdom) that was not of this world. A Kingdom of which they were actually "ambassadors." Whatever kingdom of this world we find ourselves living in, we are first and foremost citizens of a very different Kingdom. And today, as never before, our credibility in sharing God's character of radical, other-centered, self-sacrificial love within our current culture is critically dependent on our understanding the differences between religion and politics and understanding that Jesus' Kingdom was about neither. It is our prayer that you will be deeply blessed by this month's featured presentation – *Religion and Politics* by Herb Montgomery

Renewed Heart Ministries provides many of its resources free of charge. In order to provide this service, we are dependent on the contributions of our supporters. If you would like to make a one-time gift or offer monthly support,\* please send your contributions to the following address:

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

# Testimonies

Thank you for your presentation at Carolina CM. regarding God's forgiveness. God gave me such peace after listening to God speaking through you. And when that man stood up at the end and gave God glory for his peace, I just wanted to do the same! May God be very near to you as you travel about preaching his Word. – **JS**

Herb's seminars have blessed me. The first time I heard him was in Camp meeting 2012 in North Carolina, Camp Junaluska, I listened to his topic Intrinsic and Imposed also Prevenient Forgiveness. Then I started looking at the Renewed Heart Ministries Website and it gave me a paradigm shift and opened up my eyes in a better way to understand more about God! This is a true blessing. May God bless this ministry each day!. – **AW**

Dear Herb, what a treasure you are...I just love your preaching. I thank God for your ministry and for the paradigm shift you have given to me in my relationship with Jesus. I am 54 yrs. old, not raised in a Christian home. I was Baptized in 1986. But I have only recently received from a friend a link to a sermon of yours on YouTube. Since then I have been 'drinking' up your sermons, I receive your daily quotations and your weekly emails. 'I LOVE HOW YOU HAVE MADE ME SEE AND UNDERSTAND THE TRUE LOVE OF JESUS'. I am amazed with how I have been taught to view 'God' our Father and His Son 'Jesus' and to be liberated with the truth I have experienced in your sermons. I have been downloading your audio sermons and passing them onto my family . . . My aim today was to give you a big hug and thank you so much for opening my eyes and therefore my heart to the 'True Jesus'. My prayer is that God may continue to bless you mightily with the ministry work He has given you to do, and your loving willingness to spread His Love to all. May He also bless your family and those who work with you. I will continue to listen and download your sermons and most importantly to share them with lots of other people.. – **A**

## Schedule

### JULY 19, 2012

Oklahoma Camp Meeting  
Wewoka, OK  
405.721.6110

### AUGUST 31 - SEPTEMBER 1, 2012

Willits Adventist Church  
Willits, CA  
916.787.7756

### SEPTEMBER 14-22, 2012

Lee's Summit Adventist Church  
Lee's Summit, MO  
816.697.3772

### SEPTEMBER 27-29, 2012

Springtown Adventist Church  
Gentry, AR  
479.790.4832

### OCTOBER 12-20, 2012

Central Adventist Church  
Albuquerque, NM  
505.836.1845

Contributions can also be made online at:  
[www.renewedheartministries.com](http://www.renewedheartministries.com)

\*All donations will receive a tax-deductible receipt.

Be sure to check out RHM's *free* resources at:  
[www.renewedheartministries.com](http://www.renewedheartministries.com)