



# Awakenings

"Only by love is love awakened."

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## ***Reconciling the Old Testament God with Jesus.***

**by Herb Montgomery**

Long ago, God spoke to our ancestors in many and various forms by the prophets, but in these last days, he has spoken to us by a Son [Who is] the exact image of God's very being. Hebrews 1.1-3

*Part 7*

This month, I want to share with you some thoughts that were revolutionary when they were shared with me. I have to admit from the very beginning this week, that these thoughts and way of interpreting the Old Testament are not original to me by any means, but were the common way the early church interpreted it; this method was rediscovered during the Second Reformation of the sixteenth century. But that's a history for another time and place. This week, we are endeavoring to reconcile the God we see in the Old Testament with the God we see in the Person of Jesus Christ.

I also want to make it clear that I am one of those who deeply wrestles with much of what I see in the God of the Old Testament. I have, over and over, in the last twenty years, revisited the Old Testament God, trying to make sense out of Him. I have read book after book, but nothing seemed to quite answer it for me. But here is the rub: I really didn't know what my problem was. It was vague and unidentifiable. For example, I'd read a book on this topic and say, "Well, that's all well and good and all, but there's something still missing. I'm missing something. That doesn't seem to quite fix it." Another example of this was in a presentation I made three years ago in Northern California for a week-long gathering of many different speakers. The title was *Jekyll and Hyde*. And while I was pleased with how the presentation went and truly believed everything I had shared and felt it came across simply and clearly, I walked away with that unidentifiable gnawing once again inside me, saying, "Yeah, but that still doesn't quite solve it."

Two years ago, I remember sitting on a plane reading Paul Copan's book *Is God A Moral Monster?* and feeling the exact same way. There is a lot that's good in the book; some thoughts were new to me, but I still sat there feeling like it didn't really solve things for me.

Then, last December, sitting at a restaurant, having lunch with a pastor friend of mine (Dr. Gregory Boyd) in St. Paul, not the answer, but the *problem* I had been having became clear as sunlight to me. I remember sitting there with Greg,

the two of us talking about this very topic we are discussing this week, and Greg said something that made my years of wrestling click! I didn't have the answer yet, but, for the first time, my problem made sense. All these authors I had been reading did an excellent job of trying to soften the picture we get of the Old Testament God. They had invested page after page of writing and intellectual energy trying to reconcile the Old Testament God with "justice" to make Him look fair, so to speak, righteous even, or right. And while I admire their efforts to make the God of the Old Testament look less ugly, they really weren't solving MY problem with Him.

You see, there is a world of difference between reconciling the God of the Old Testament with *justice* and reconciling the God of the Old Testament with *Jesus*.

My problem was *How do you reconcile the picture of God we get from the Old Testament with the picture of God we get in the Person of Jesus Christ?* What I was about to discover over the next few months, after defining my actual problem, was actually the way the secondary reformers solved the same problem in the sixteenth century, and, much to my surprise, a rediscovery of the way the early church reconciled this difference too. And this is where we pick up this week's focus text:

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son [who is] the exact imprint of God's very being. Hebrews 1.1-3

Now, I want to look at this concept in general terms first and then we will apply it specifically to the current subject of Non-Violence or the Peace teachings of Jesus. There are three terms we need to become familiar with: 1) Concession, 2) Accommodation, and 3) the Ideal.

Let's talk about *concession* first, and I'll try and keep this brief. Imagine with me that I am a missionary and I have just landed in an undeveloped area of this world with a few unique characteristics. First, the people there have never seen a white person before. (Imagine them poking my skin repeatedly). Second, they are cannibals (which may be why they were poking my skin: checking my tenderness, come to think of it). And, lastly, they had some unique beliefs. They are a very violent people who worship their dead ancestors,

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and once a year, they offer in sacrifice a new-born baby in a religious ceremony in honor of their dead ancestors. Now, here is the challenge: I am a follower of Jesus and I am going to try to win them to following Jesus too. However, I can't just bulldoze over their existing culture. I have to work slowly with these people. If I were to push them too far and too fast, I would wind up losing them and maybe even end up on their plates. So, what should I do? What would you start with first? I don't know about you, but the first place I would start is to try to get them to offer an animal instead of those babies once a year. (With the intent that I would eventually get them away from even doing that!)

But, while I'm working on that, I'm going to have to concede, or ignore, those other things. What would be supremely unfair is if someone were to make a judgment about what I believed, based on the time I was working with this barbaric culture. It would be a gross misrepresentation of who I am. I actually do this on a regular basis. When I get to a church for a weekend event, I have to size that church up rather quickly, decide what areas to leave alone and what areas God would have me address that weekend. Some fish are bigger fish to fry than others, and I'm there for only a short time.

Where am I going to do the most good in the shortest amount of time? But, for someone to assume that I believe everything that church believes just because I didn't address something would be a grossly unfair assumption. This leads me to my point.

The God we see in the Old Testament is making concession after concession trying to reach the people of the culture of the time. God does not start with an ideal and speaking condemnation toward us for not measuring up. God does not start where He wishes we were, condemning us for what we are not. God starts where we actually are, and then speaks hope while patiently and graciously loving us into becoming what we can be.

On top of all of this, you have to add the reality that these people God was working with had their own misconceptions of what a "god" should be. Not understanding what strength really is, if God showed up looking like Jesus, they would have seen this as weakness and followed after a different God instead, such as Baal, Dagon, Chemosh, Astarte, etc. Israel struggled with this enough as it was. God has to move them slowly to try to effect change without it being too much too fast, and losing them. It would be grossly unfair to define what we believe about God's ideals from this era of the scriptures. It would be fair to see in them how far God will go to meet us where we are. That is beautiful!

Now let's talk about *accommodations*. There are seven areas I want to quickly note that help us see how God sometimes accommodates where we are at, temporarily. We'll take our time with the first, which will enable us to quickly understand the remaining six at a glance. This first one is the polygamy of the Old Testament. To be perfectly clear, God's ideal for marriage is revealed in the Genesis Narrative. But what happens when you find yourself in a culture that is



extremely patriarchal and chauvinistic, where women are little more than property? This is evil, but you must slowly bring these people to see how evil it is so they themselves turn from this evil. But, add to this the fact that this culture is also very barbaric and war-mongering, and through the repeated violence of war, there are many more women than men. The only way for these women to survive in this culture is to be connected to a man (either a father or a husband). Yes, our ideal is that a marriage consists of only two people, but if something isn't done quickly and temporarily, mind you, countless women will be forced into slavery or prostitution to escape the poverty of begging. So, what do you do? Polygamy is evil, but do you allow it for a time, temporarily, knowing that even though it's not ideal, for the time being, it is the lesser of two evils?

This brings me to my point on accommodations. God is accommodating. Unlike ethical principles, which are always abstract, universal, and idealistic, God always perfectly tailors the ideals of the ideal to the complex uniqueness of each individual's non-ideal life situation in the present. We live out this image of God by following God's example by loving people where they are in the complexity and uniqueness of their non-ideal situations and without judgments. This is not relativizing morality. On the contrary, it is recognizing the difference between God's accommodating will and His ideal will. God's ideal will is what God wants, given a perfect situation. God's accommodating will is God's will, given the situation we are in, which is anything but perfect. We follow God's example in this when we hold the ideal, subservient to love. Morality is absolute, but only God can direct us to apply the ideal in a particular non-ideal situation.

We see God doing this over and over again in the Old Testament. Starting with polygamy (Exodus 21.10), slavery (Deuteronomy 23.15), Israel having a King (1 Samuel 8.22), the Nationalism of the Old Testament (verses "All People"), all the way to the Law itself, with all its punishments and rewards (Deuteronomy 28, see also the presentations on our Website entitled *Intrinsic or Imposed* and *No Longer Under The Law*. When we, as parents, lay down the law for our children we know that this is a way of relating to them that is only temporary and we hope they learn the lessons before they reach 18. As a side note, if you were to ask my nine-year-old to write my biography, it too would look a lot like the Old

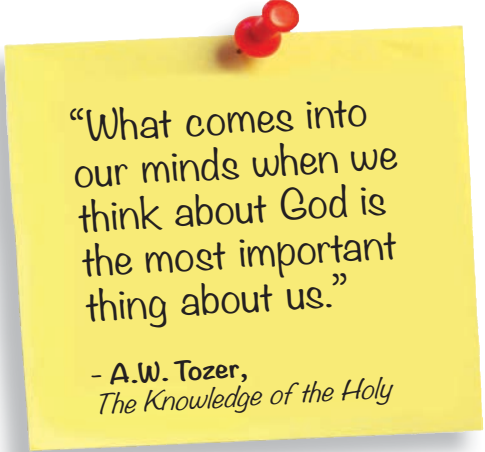
Testament. But if I were to ask her to rewrite my biography when she reaches 40, I'm quite sure she would paint a more complete picture of what I really am like as a person. Some might even say that I had changed between the two writings, when, in fact, it was not a change in me that took place, but a maturity that took place in my daughter who was writing. See also 1 Corinthians 13.9-10 and Hebrews 8.13).

The Patriarchy of the Old Testament is like this as well. Compare the Patriarchy of the Old Testament with Jesus' treatment of women according to first century Jewish standards, and the result is breathtaking (See Luke 10.38-41, This passage challenges the role designations for women in the first century; the role of disciple and future minister of Jesus' message is more critical than that of homemaker and hostess, and is also open to women. People normally sat on chairs or, at banquets, reclined on couches; but disciples sat at the feet of their teachers. Serious disciples were preparing to be teachers—a role not permitted to women. (The one notable exception in the second century was a learned rabbi's daughter who had married another learned rabbi; but most rabbis rejected her opinions.) Mary's posture and eagerness to absorb Jesus' teaching at the expense of a more traditional womanly role (10:40) would have shocked most Jewish men

and Jesus affirms Mary as belonging there (See also, Galatians 3.28).

Here is the point of it all: Strip away all the concessions and accommodations of the God of the Old Testament, and you get a God who looks like Jesus . . .

This article is continued (for the sake of space) on our website at: <http://www.renewedheartministries.com/Esights/08-16-2012>



“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

- A.W. Tozer,  
*The Knowledge of the Holy*

## 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.

### **Oklahoma Camp Meeting , Wewoka, OK July 19, 2012**

The next event was the Oklahoma Camp Meeting in Wewoka, OK. The electricity had just come on at home, and I was off to another set of meetings.

Now Oklahoma does things a bit differently. Other Camp Meetings bring you in for a week and have you speak once a day. Not Oklahoma. They bring you in for one day and let you give all five or six presentations back to back. I knew this was going to be a marathon, but I had no idea what I was really in for.

I left Lewisburg and flew to Atlanta. From there, my flight to Memphis was delayed, causing me to miss my Memphis-to-Oklahoma City flight by only two minutes. Actually, the flight was still sitting there and the jet bridge had not even been withdrawn, but the door had just been closed.

The soonest they could get me to Oklahoma City was the next day at noon. That would be halfway through my day of presentations! I had two options. Cancel, or do the unthinkable.

I shot up a quick prayer and I distinctly felt Jesus say to me, “Herb, this is the enemy. We’ve met him together before. I’ll provide, I’ll get you through this, but you have to get to Oklahoma. There is someone there whom the Enemy does

not want to hear what I have to share through you.” I said, “Ok, Lord, but you’re going to have to give me the energy to do it.”

I walked downstairs, rented a car, and drove eight hours to Oklahoma City. I left Memphis in a rental car at 8:30 p.m. and drove all night long, reaching Oklahoma City at 4:30 a.m. I got to my hotel at 5:30 and was asleep by 6:00 am. Then, I woke up two hours later, grabbed a quick shower, and began my presentations at 9:30.

I asked for their patience, explaining that I had just driven all night long, and we began. Again, God showed up. I didn’t know who I was there for, but I knew I’d bump into her. After my presentations that evening, I was in the Book Center doing a book signing, and she had purposely waited to be last in line. It was 10 p.m. and personally, I was wasted. I don’t remember ever having to fight so hard to get to a series of meetings, but here she was.

Her story broke my heart. Because of confidentiality issues, I do not have the liberty to share with you the details of her story, but it would break your heart too. She had been given a copy of my book and had met Jesus for the first significant time. In a prayer, still doubting—because of all she had suffered in her life—whether God really did love her, whether the things in this book were true, she prayed, “God, if you are real, and you really do love me, then could you have me meet this author personally? I need to meet him, Lord. I need these to be more than words on a page, I need to be able to reach out and see this author is real too.” And there we were, both of us, tear stained and face-to-face. She had left for the camp

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## Ministry Update, continued from page 3

meeting with no idea who the speakers were going to be this year, and on Wednesday night, she recognized the name on the docket for Thursday. She could not believe it. She could not believe God loved her and was actually answering her prayer. Then, to hear what God had to do to get to her—it blew her away.

What a beautiful God we serve. That evening, she became a follower of Jesus.

Welcome to the Kingdom.

I got on the plane the next morning and slept all the way home. Upon reaching my house, I crashed and slept for three more hours. I was wiped out.

For all of you who were praying for this event, I have been preaching for twenty years now. I have never had to fight so hard to get to a location to preach. I don't know what plans are in store for my new friend, but what I do know is that the Enemy didn't want us to meet. *Viva Christus Victor!* The Enemy did not win and the Kingdom was enlarged.

It was a beautiful moment. We can sleep when we are dead. In the meantime, we are called to risk more, to reflect more and, for the sake of Jesus's Kingdom, to invest in things that will live on after we are gone. Wherever this finds you today, live in God's radical, other-centered, self-sacrificial love for you, and go build the Kingdom.

I love you guys. Thank you for your prayers and for your support.

## Featured Presentation



This month, we are featuring a presentation Herb gave last summer while doing a series in South Lake Tahoe, entitled, *The Way of Peace*. It's a heartfelt look at the actual teaching of Jesus on the subject of non-violence and how it affects our own pictures of God. It's an honest questioning of why and when Christianity abandoned Jesus teachings on this subject, an a sincere call to all who bear the name of Christ to return to the actual picture of God Jesus demonstrated as well as the actual teachings of Jesus Himself in regards to how His followers are to relate to others. We pray your hear will be renewed as you listen to this month's presentation - *The Way of Peace* by Herb Montgomery

# Testimonies

At 63 I am just figuring out that God loves me. I am learning to trust that He will take care of me and He has been so faithful. I have spent most of my life with the 'Angry God.' I know the things I have done, very bad things. I know the condition of my heart. I have spent a large portion of my life consumed with anger, unforgiveness, depression and self hate. Renewed Heart Ministries has turned my life around. It has given me hope and showed me a loving faithful forgiving God. God has healed and continues to heal in my heart. I still have battles and will until I die because old mindsets and hearts die hard but Jesus loves me this I know. I am so grateful for your ministry and being able to listen to sermons at Renewed Heart Ministries online. Thank you so much. - **M**

Your meetings were truly inspirational. Your presentations demonstrated thinking "outside of the box" which were most refreshing. I wish that we had more like you. I've attended meetings in New York City, Berrien Springs, Chicago, and Keene and can say that I've never heard a speaker like you. Keep up the great work! - **TR**

## Schedule

### SEPTEMBER 14-22, 2012

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

### NOVEMBER 5-10, 2012

Kirkland Adventist School/  
Edmonds Adventist Church  
Kirkland, WA and Edmonds, WA  
425.822.7554

### SEPTEMBER 27-29, 2012

Springtown Adventist Church  
Gentry, AR  
479.790.4832

### NOVEMBER 16-18, 2012

North Fork Adventist Church  
North Fork, CA  
559.479.9403

### OCTOBER 12-20, 2012

Central Adventist Church  
Albuquerque, NM  
505.836.1845

### NOVEMBER 2-4, 2012

North Cascade Adventist Church  
Burlington, WA  
360.757.7577

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