



"Only by love is love awakened."

 Herb Montgomery



A Seven Day Challenge

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

"Christus Victor was predominant for the first 1000 years of the church's history...[It] is a picture of God in Christ liberating humanity out of bondage from sin, death, and the devil. Thus we could say that the 'classic' view is characterized by a central theme of liberation in the context of restorative justice, whereas the later 'Latin' view is characterized by a central theme of appeasement in the context of retributive justice."

*—Derek Flood;
Healing the Gospel: A Radical
Vision for Grace, Justice,
and the Cross*

"But to you who are listening, I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn the other. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." —Luke 6.27-36

Last month we shared an e-Sights and podcast on the above text. I'd like to share those thoughts with our Newsletter readers as well. Jesus' teaching here is critical. The "love your enemy" ethic of Jesus was the deal breaker for many who initially desired to be His followers. Let's look at some background first this week and then wrap up with a seven day challenge.

Let's go back to Luke 4, which we covered a few weeks ago, where Jesus first began to teach "love your enemies" in the Gospel of Luke, and take another look. This will be from Luke 4.16-28:

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the

Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

What I find profound is that if you go back and look at the original statement in Isaiah 61.1-2, Jesus was virtually saying, "I will be announcing the favor of God and leaving off all that 'vengeful God' stuff." But what those in Jesus' audience did not catch yet was that Jesus would be proclaiming God's favor on all . . . even their enemies. Follow closely:

All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked. Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'" "Truly I tell you," he continued, "prophets are not accepted in their hometowns. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian."

Initially, everyone was speaking well of Jesus at this stage, but it's as if Jesus was saying, "You guys aren't getting what I'm saying. Let me make it a little more clear." So he dropped two stories from their history that, because of

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Testimonies

Just heard Herb Montgomery speak at Summersville, WV and it opened my heart and mind to so much! Words cannot explain what my heart is feeling. I am so blessed to have been there as his message was exactly what the doctor (God) ordered! Thank you! – *Anonymous*

I am really interested in learning more about this model (Christus Victor). I looked into it once and was really intrigued, as it seems much more in alignment with a loving God. – *DA*

Thanks again for coming up to our church in Paradise. I'm Looking forward to sharing the cd's with my friends. It will be cold water on parched lips! – *BM*

We had communion service today, and I started thinking about what it means in terms of Christus Victor. Such a shift that it feels like a mind warp where you see real clear for a bit and then all the old stuff washes back over. I could see for a moment though, that taking his blood and body means taking up the cross and non-violently loving the world, and celebrating all that it means. Would love to have you expand on communion. – *SL*

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their location, were loaded: the widow of Sidon and Naaman the Syrian.

To really get the importance of what Jesus was doing here, we have to take into account what this was saying to those present. This was not so much about Elijah and Elisha as it was about Sidon and Syria. Jesus was referring to the history surrounding the Maccabean revolt. Here is just a little bit of history:

Judas Maccabeus' father was Mattathias. Mattathias' dying words to his sons were, "Pay back the Gentiles in full, and obey the commands of the law." (1 Maccabees 2.68). Judas Maccabeus, in standing up to the Seleucids (Greeks), earns the nickname "The Hammer" for the very reason that he is fulfilling his father's dying wish. A messiah, "Judas Maccabeus" style was the expectation when Jesus arrived on the scene. Sidon was a significant city under the Seleucid Empire, and the memory of the torture of Hebrews by the hands of the Seleucids was recent history (Read 1 and 2 Maccabees). In addition, the gentiles of Sidon would have been associated with the history of the Seleucid tortures (1 Maccabees 5.15); Syria was where the Seleucid Empire was based. Rome simply referred to the Seleucid Empire as "Syria." In Luke 4, when Jesus announced he would proclaim God's favor but not God's vengeance, and then drove it home by mentioning that it included even their tormentors, it was too much for them to take.

It was like telling Cubans that God's favor applied to Fidel Castro, too. Or to Venezuelans that God's favor applied to Hugo Chavez, too. Or to Israel that God's favor applies to the Palestinians, too. Or to Americans that God's favor applied to Bin Laden and Al-Qaida, too.

NO WONDER they wanted to throw him off the cliff.

"All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built in order to throw him off the cliff."

At the heart of Jesus' teaching about God, ourselves, and others (as well as how we are to live), was a loud cry to now love your enemies. It was as if Jesus were saying, "I know you've been taught to love your neighbor. Now I'm going to teach you how to love your enemies. I know it's new. But then you'll be like Him who sent me," (Lev 19.18; Matthew 5.43-45; John 13.34).

This teaching of Jesus has, ever since the "conversion of Constantine" in the fourth century, never proven to be popular. Following Jesus has become tamed, domesticated, and conventional. But the picture we get of Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is of an itinerant going around and gathering those who will join him in a revolutionary way of living life that he calls "the Kingdom of God." The "Kingdom of God" is not some place out in the heavens, nor is it a place some go to when they die. This "Kingdom of God" is a radical rearrangement of how we see God, ourselves, and everyone else that leads to a radical rearrangement of how we do life in the here and now. It is a radical rearrangement of how human beings arrange their society that is "of God" or "from God"... to us ... through this person Jesus. To enter THIS is entirely revolutionary. It is a radical break with life as we have known it, as it has been given to us as we have been told; as we have been instructed is the natural way of life. It is a call to go against how we have been indoctrinated, to go against the scripts we have been handed, the rules we have been given on how to play the game (personal rights, tit for tat, etc.). To "follow Jesus" is to break with

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all of that and say, "I want to live by an entirely different evaluation of what is important." It's radical. It's revolutionary.

Today, Jesus is still extending an ongoing invitation to join his revolution. He is looking for those who are weak but daring, afraid but believing, unsure but willing to take a risk; people who are simply crazy enough to go for it with Him. To follow Jesus and live the Jesus way is the most revolutionary thing a human being can do. It is not about a ticket to go to Heaven (how boring, tame, and domesticated). It is not about saying a simple prayer, going to church once a week, and then simply going back to the way things have always been done. To follow Jesus IS radical and revolutionary. It is to adopt a completely counterintuitive way of doing life called "The Way," of which Jesus is the template. The "Kingdom of God," rightly understood, is an alternate society formed around Jesus, His picture of God, and His teachings. It is about leaning to follow the Jesus practice of love, forgiveness, restorative justice, mercy, and fidelity to self-sacrificial, other-centeredness.

We are too skilled at taming revolutions and making them conventional. Too skilled at turning things like the Sermon on the Mount and the teachings of enemy love into a blasé blessing of the conventional life

we have always known.

As Brian Zahnd was recently quoted as saying, "The seeds of revolution will always be present as long as the Jesus story is always around, and you just never know when someone might leap."

HeartGroup Application

1) Prayerfully and thoughtfully reread Luke 6.27–36. Since I want to add something extracurricular, so to speak, I would like you to read Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous Christmas sermon from 1967. You can find it at <http://endsandmeans.org/martin-luther-king-jrs-christmas-sermon-1967/>

What I find interesting about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is that as a Baptist minister, Christianity had so domesticated the teachings of Jesus that he had to go to India and meet Gandhi to encounter the Jesus teachings of enemy love. Wow.

2) A Seven Day Challenge:

This part will not be easy for you. I want you to picture in your minds eye the person on this planet you like the least. Do you have them in your mind? Good. Now, I want you to simply pray for them for the next seven days. That is all. Once a day, for the next seven days, pray for them, sincerely. Pray blessings on them for just seven days. And then make sure you do number 3

next.

3) Prepare to share with your HeartGroup this week your struggles, your challenges, your insights, your convictions, and your commitments with regard to this aspect of Jesus' teachings this week. Then, as a group, spend some time in prayer over what it truly means to follow Jesus.

Last, for everyone, I want to recommend the 11-part series from RHM that we did last year on the active non-violence (or enemy love) of Jesus. If you would like to listen to them, the title you will be looking for is The Active, Non-Violence of Jesus, Parts 1-11. You can find this podcast series at:

www.renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts

Or, if you would like to simply read through the series, you can find the same E-sight series at:

www.renewedheartministries.com/Esights/05-27-2012

through

www.renewedheartministries.com/Esights/10-03-2012

Today, wherever this finds you, love subversively and dedicatedly. Do not wax cold until a world where love reigns is the only world that remains. Vive la resistance. LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION! ■

MINISTRY UPDATE

Paradise, California community (and a few church members) encounter Jesus for the first time.

February 22 – March 2, 2013

"I'm a pastor's son, and third generation Seventh-day Adventist, and I just met Jesus for the first time today," he says with tears in his eyes as he grips my hand. "I cannot thank you enough."

And THAT is one of the reasons we do what we do here at Renewed Heart Ministries. Regardless of whether a person falls into the ever popular ways of categorizing people, such as church or unchurched, God loves all, God died to rescue all, and God is alive enough today to reach all regardless of whether they are religious or not. In actuality, it is the religious who present the greatest challenge when it comes to helping them see the radical teachings of who their Jesus actually was.

For all of you who prayed for the nine-day event in Paradise, CA, I want to personally thank you. We gave our Life Unlimited series, which you can find on our website.

The topics we covered were: Jesus' radically different understanding of God's character, and, therefore, God's prevenient forgiveness, Jesus' answer to the why of human suffering, a Jesus-defined understanding of the Cross through the paradigm of Rescue rather than satisfaction, Jesus' teachings on nonviolence, his call to embrace poverty to help the poor, his command to abandon hierarchy in favor of the brother and sisterhood of all believers, and many, many more.

Each night I was swarmed by people after the presentations whose hearts were overflowing with gratitude for their encounters with Jesus and the Father's radical, self-sacrificial, other-centered love. For some, it was a first time encounter. And not all of those first time encounters were from the unchurched.

I'm on my way back to my family as I write this. I'm home for one day and then I'm off to Wisconsin to do it all over again. This week I was reminded of the 17th century Moravians who, when forbidden to share Jesus with the slaves, sold themselves into slavery to do so. When the slave owners' ship pulled out of the harbor, headed for the West Indies, they cried back to their loved ones on the shore, "May the Lamb who was slain, receive the reward of His suffering." This has become my motto this month. It is my cry and the creed I am living by. When my feet grow weary, when my head feels heavy, and when my heart is longing for my home, "May the Lamb who was slain receive the reward of His suffering"!



MINISTRY UPDATE

**The Jesus Dialogue - Union Grove, Wisconsin
March 8-16, 2013**

I knew this was going to be a great series of meetings when I was told that the host for the presentations was going to be the Ironwood Chophouse and Saloon in Union Grove, Wisconsin.

This was by far one of my favorite series I'd done in quite a while. So many pitched in and played a part to make these meetings not only fun, but also what I consider to be a genuine success for the Kingdom. It was one of the smallest series I'd ever done, which gave it a more relationally intimate feel for all who attended. And I'm happy to say that the meetings resulted in 24 folks from all walks of life and varying backgrounds now wanting to continue their experience with Jesus and one another through open, mutually participatory gatherings on a regular basis, learning how to practice the "one anothers" of the New Testament.

One person from the group that sponsored the meetings sent out an email after the first weekend. The message was about a dear lady whose name I have changed to Susan to protect her identity. You will understand as you read it.

"I have to relate a story told to me by a woman who has been coming to The Jesus Dialogue the past two nights; her name is Susan. I first met Susan over the phone when she called for more information after receiving her connecting card in the mail. Susan is a postal worker who also happens to be a follower of Jesus. She said that she was so impressed by the subject matter in the connecting card that she felt moved to share it with one of her customers. Now Susan, I remind you, is a federal employee, and for a federal employee sharing your faith on the job can be fairly risky business to your fellow employees and much more to customers. But Susan was so impressed that this was what she needed to do, despite the consequences. And for Susan, her fears were realized

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when she was called into her postmaster's office because a complaint had been received from the customer with whom she shared the connecting card. The point is, Susan was willing to risk all to follow her convictions to promote an event that she was not even personally invested in, featuring a speaker she had never even heard of. . . . Susan's last line in her story to me had the greatest impact, and nearly brought me to tears. She said that she was willing to share that connecting card, even if it meant losing her job over it. In fact she said that if she had lost her job (she hasn't so far) it would have been all right because she was confident that God would take care of her. She just knew it was the right thing to do. Susan is a person who obviously sold out to Jesus. We think that the main purpose of this event was so that we could teach something to others, but I learned something from Susan. Am I as sold out to Jesus? Would I risk as much as she did?"

"Susan" is one of the 24 we mentioned above.

Wherever this finds you, keep being Jesus to the world you come in contact with each and every day. Keep loving like Jesus, living like Jesus and humbly serving like Jesus. Keep enlarging the Kingdom, one person at a time, till a world where love reigns is the only world that remains. The gospel truly is revolutionary.

And for all who were praying for this event, thank you. The journey of following Jesus has begun for many who attended. Keep them in your prayers, too, as we all endeavor to continue to put on display the radical, other-centered, self-sacrificial love of God as revealed through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. And to any of the twenty four, if you happen to be reading this . . . Welcome to the Kingdom!

HeartGroups Update

New HeartGroups Website and Directory!

It is our distinct pleasure to introduce to you the new HeartGroups directory and Website at: www.rhmheartgroups.com

or by going to RHM's website, renewedheartministries.com, and clicking on the HeartGroups tab.

This is an exciting new venture for us and we are looking forward to watching this grow as we all learn together how to genuinely practice the one another's of Christ's Kingdom.

If your HeartGroup is not in the directory, please feel free to list it. The directory updates every 24 hours.

This is a voluntary registry for Renewed Heart Ministries' HeartGroups and those who are dedicated to enlarging Christ's radical, self-sacrificial, other-centered Kingdom, specifically in the area of recovering the "One Another" nature of the New Testament ekklesia under the Headship of Jesus over His Body, where the "priesthood" of all believers is embraced by the practice of open, mutually participatory gatherings. This directory is not intended to promote (nor demote) churches

which manifest a clergy/laity environment. This directory is intended rather, to be an aid in finding groups in a desired location that welcome, embrace and practice open, respectful, and mutual sharing and participation.

The Groups registered here are not vetted by Renewed Heart Ministries, nor do they represent Renewed Heart Ministries. Therefore Renewed Heart Ministries makes no guarantees that each group here actually practices what is stated in the paragraph above. Registering to be listed in this directory simply states your group is expressing an interest in and are endeavoring to embrace and grow in what has been stated above.

Do use your best discretion as you contact other groups in this list. Please report any abuses or unsolicited commercial offers.

All activity in this Registry is emailed to the Registry Keeper as it occurs. Renewed Heart Ministries reserves the right to remove your listing at any time.

Thank you for caring and for your interest in enlarging Christ's radical, self-sacrificial, other-centered Kingdom and rebuilding New Testament Ekklesia, arm and arm with "one another", under the Headship of Christ.



"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' [retributive justice] . . . But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you [restorative justice]." – Jesus

(From Herb's Twitter Feed)

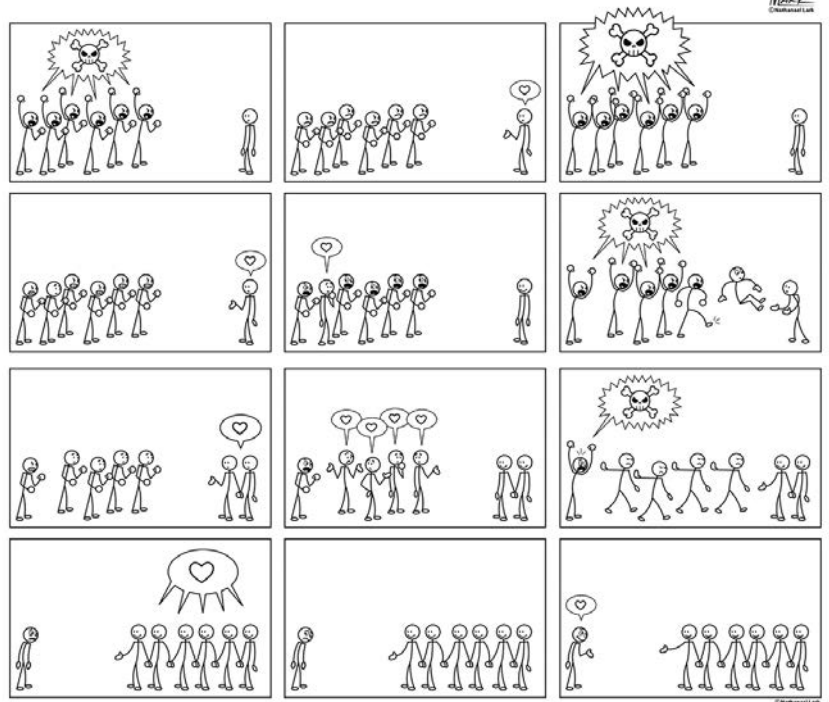
MINISTRY UPDATE

What does it look like when we endeavor to influence the world through embracing a cross?

"We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will and we will still love you. We cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws and abide by the unjust system, because non-cooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good, and so throw us in jail and we will still love you. Bomb our homes and threaten our children, and, as difficult as it is, we will still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our communities at the midnight hour and drag us out on some wayside road and leave us half-dead as you beat us, and we will still love you. Send your propaganda agents around the country, and make it appear that we are not fit, culturally and otherwise, for integration, and we'll still love you. But be assured that we'll wear you down by our capacity to suffer, and one day we will win our freedom. We will not only win freedom for ourselves; we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process, and our victory will be a double victory."

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 1967

How To Change The World



Schedule

APRIL 26-28, 2013

Plainfield Adventist Church
Plainfield, NH
603.675.2455

MAY 3-11, 2013

Follow The Lamb
(A new series on Revelation)
Crescent City Adventist
Church
Crescent City, CA
707.464.2738

MAY 17-18, 2013

Alturas Adventist Church
Alturas, CA
530.279.6191

JUNE 14-22, 2013

Arizona Campmeeting
Prescott, AZ
480.991.6777

JUNE 28-30, 2013

Parkwood Adventist
Church
Modesto, CA
209.523.5221

Quotable Quotes

"May the Lamb who was slain receive the reward of His sufferings."

—Moravian Jesus Followers

When 17th century Moravians were told that they would not be allowed to teach the gospel to slaves, Dober and Nitschmann sold themselves to a slave owner in order to subversively share Jesus with the slave population as slaves themselves. They boarded the slave ship bound for the West Indies, and as the ship pulled away from the docks, it is said that they called out these words to their loved ones on shore.





Testimonies

From Herb's Facebook page

"If I'm migrating in the right direction, it would seem to me that the gospel in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is not a theological construct of the 16th century, three steps or four laws. Its the good news that the Kingdom has arrived. A Kingdom, which is radically different than the

kingdom we have been delivered from. A Kingdom that is rooted and grounded in a radically different way of seeing God, seeing ourselves, and seeing everyone else. To encounter THIS Kingdom moves someone, from some place deep within, to endeavor to live radically differently in regards to issues of control, power, ego, money, pleasure and personal security. The desire to live in this radically new way is motivated simply by the desire to put on display radical beauty of this new

picture of God, and this new way of viewing ourselves and others. It was by putting on display, the beauty of the Father through humble servant love and calling those who embrace this beauty to live a radically different way than how they had been indoctrinated that Jesus enlarged the Kingdom. (But it also got Him killed.) And then he looks at us and says, 'Follow Me.'"

– Herb Montgomery

Featured Presentation



Much of the misunderstanding that we find causing significant damage to people's picture of God, and thus their relationship with Him as well, revolves around misunderstandings on the subject of God's forgiveness. When does God forgive? Why do we need to ask God to forgive? If God is so loving, why doesn't he just forgive and let everyone into Heaven? Did Jesus really

need to die for God to forgive? And the list goes on and on. This month we would like to feature a presentation from our <I>Forgive Our Trespasses</I> series entitled <I>Prevenient Forgiveness</I>. And although it may sound a tad bit radical, Herb is asking us to consider what God's forgiveness looks like when we allow our understanding of it to be defined by that Jewish carpenter found in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? This month's featured Presentation:, *Prevenient Forgiveness*.

Renewed Heart Ministries provides its resources free of charge. Jesus commanded, "Freely you have received, freely give." We at RHM take this command very seriously. Philosophically we have a hard time charging money to people for things God has given us for free.

In order to do this, we are entirely 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

Contributions can also be made online at:
www.renewedheartministries.com

*All donations receive a tax- deductible receipt.

Be sure to check out RHM's *free* resources at: www.renewedheartministries.com