

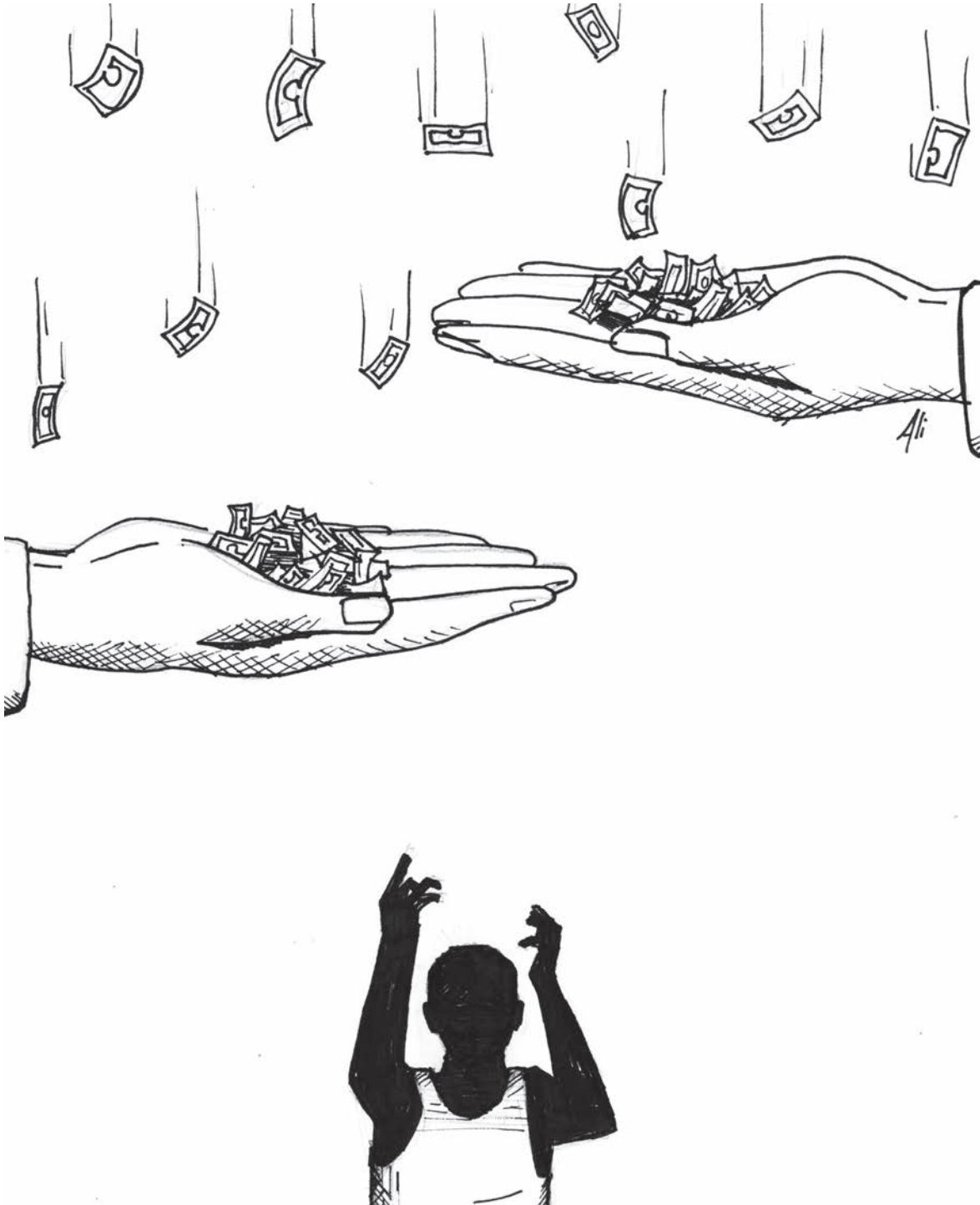


RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

# Awakenings

*"Only by love is love awakened."*

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries ::::: September 2016 :::::



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Featured Presentation

Renewed Heart Ministries

P.O. Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901

Phone: 304.520.0030

Email: [info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com)

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@RenewedHeartMin



Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery

**"The one who slaps you on the cheek, offer him the other as well; and to the person wanting to take you to court and get your shirt, turn over to him the coat as well. And the one who conscripts you for one mile, go with him a second. To the one who asks of you, give; and from the one who borrows, do not ask back what is yours."**

**(Q 6:29-30)**

The International Q Project has titled this section of *Sayings Gospel Q* "Renouncing One's Rights." While I agree that rights are central to this passage, I want to emphasize that this teaching wasn't a way for followers of Jesus to become 1<sup>st</sup> Century door mats. Rather it was a tactical strategy for them to use in the midst of persecution (we discussed this at [renewedheartministries.com/Esights/01-24-2016](http://renewedheartministries.com/Esights/01-24-2016), respond to their persecutors with love (see [renewedheartministries.com/Esights/02-12-2016](http://renewedheartministries.com/Esights/02-12-2016)), and actively furthering their work toward a safer, more compassionate world for all. That last item is what this week's eSight is all about.

Let's begin, as usual, by looking at our companion texts.

**Luke 6:29-30:** "If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again."

**Luke 6:35:** "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."

**Matthew 5:39-42:** "But I say to you, Do not [reciprocate evil toward]\* an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you."

**Gospel of Thomas 95:** "If you have money, do not lend it out at interest. Rather, give it to the one from whom you will not get it back."

There is much to unpack in this week's passage from *Sayings Gospel Q*. The list of peace activists from the last two centuries is long. ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_peace\\_activists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_peace_activists)) This week's saying has been influential, both directly and non-directly, in many of the nonviolent movements around the globe toward positive social change. Some of the most well known names in the last century were Gandhi in South Africa and India and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. here in America. There are lesser known names, as well, such as Dorothy Day and her nonviolent direct action on behalf of the poor in New York City. So let's dive right in.

As we have shared repeatedly in the past, in this passage, Jesus is teaching a bold and disruptive expression of nonviolence. It's a nonviolence that seeks to confront one's opponent and offer an opportunity for transformation. With each of these three examples, the oppressed person is shown potential ways of taking control of the situation, confronting their subjugator, and stripping them of the power to dehumanize. Let me explain.

First, let me say how deeply indebted I am to Walter Wink's research on the cultural backdrop of the saying of Jesus we are considering this week. I'll place a link to his work at the end of this section for further consideration. I consider his volume *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way* to continue to be a revolutionary masterpiece.

Matthew's version of this passage specifies that the cheek being struck is the "right" cheek. As most people are right-handed, the only natural way for a blow to land on the right cheek was if the striker used the back of their hand. This kind of blow in the culture of 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestine was a show of insult from a superior to an inferior: one would not strike an equal in this humiliating way because doing so carried a fine of up to 100 times the normal amount. Four zuz ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zuz\\_\(Jewish\\_coin\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zuz_(Jewish_coin))) was the fine for a blow to a social peer with a

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## Renouncing One's Rights

Originally posted on February 19, 2016

by Herb Montgomery

## Quotable Quotes

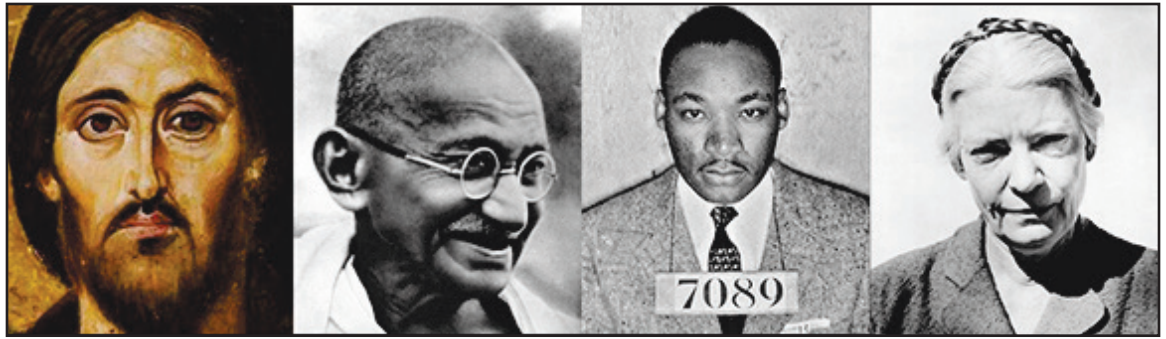
*"We do not acknowledge allegiance to any human government. We recognize but one King and Lawgiver, one Judge and Ruler of mankind. Our country is the world, our countrymen are all mankind. We love the land of our nativity only as we love all other lands. The interests and rights of American citizens are not dearer to us than those of the whole human race. Hence we can allow no appeal to patriotism to revenge any national insult or injury..."*

— Leo Tolstoy  
*The Kingdom of God Is Within You*

fist, but 400 zuz was the fine for backhanding one's peer. To strike someone you viewed as socially inferior to yourself with a backhanded slap, was perfectly acceptable and no penalty was attached (see Mishnah Bava Kamma 8.6; [sefaria.org/Mishnah\\_Bava\\_Kamma.8.1?lang=en&layout=lines&sidebarLang=all](http://sefaria.org/Mishnah_Bava_Kamma.8.1?lang=en&layout=lines&sidebarLang=all)).

Try to picture the scene in your head. Since the left hand was only used for "unclean" tasks in that culture, people would not strike a person's right cheek with that hand. At Qumran, even gesturing to another person while speaking using one's left hand carried a penalty of exclusion from the community accompanied by ten days' penance. (See *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, I QS 7, "Whoever has drawn out his left hand to gesticulate with it shall do penance for ten days." [archive.org/details/pdfy-Uy\\_BZ\\_QGsaLiJ4Zs](http://archive.org/details/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs)) Any blows would have either been from a closed right fist with one's right hand on someone's left cheek, or a back-handed slap with one's right hand on someone's right cheek. A closed fist blow from a person's right hand on one's left cheek acknowledged that the striker believed the one they were striking was their social equal. Someone claiming superiority over another would not want to strike them in this way. They would want to use an open-handed slap with the back of their hand on the other person's right cheek as an attempt at humiliating the one they were striking. It was the equivalent of saying, "Get back in your place." Also, keep in mind that any retaliatory blows from the person being struck by a "superior" would have only caused the violence to escalate.

But Jesus is not admonishing the oppressed in this scene to become a doormat or simply do nothing. Turning their left cheek would not be retaliation but defiance, a sign that the one being struck is refusing to be humiliated. The oppressor would now only have two options presented to them: a right-handed punch acknowledging the one being struck was their equal or a left-handed slap with the unclean hand. Both options would be unthinkable, and so they would lose their power in the situation.



Left to right: Jesus of Nazareth, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day

Something I would like to add to Wink's research is that this would not be an act of self-denial on the part of the person being struck. The person being struck's "self" is already being denied by their oppressor. This is self-affirmation in the face of an attempt by another to dehumanize them.

The next example in the passage involves a serious social problem in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestine: indebtedness. A little background first. *The Torah* allowed a creditor to take the himation (or outer garment) or chiton (inner garment) as security for loans from the wealthy to impoverished laborers (see Exodus 22:25-27 and Deuteronomy 24:10-13, 17). In this era, poor people had few clothes, and wealthy creditors had to return it daily so the owners could have their cloak to sleep in.

In that culture, debt was not the result of economic incompetence, but of an unjust economic system where the wealthy elite took advantage of rural peasant farmers and poor Jewish craftsmen. In our scenario, a poor laborer has defaulted on their loan and has come under the penalty of losing their next-to-last article of clothing.

Jesus's saying teaches this laborer to "turn over" not just their next-to-last article of clothing but also their last one as well. This would leave them stark naked in the town square. Wink explains that in that society the shame of nakedness fell not on those whose nakedness was exposed, but on those who looked upon or were the cause of their nakedness. The honorable response would have been to respectfully help them (see Genesis 9:20-27). In a society where only the wealthy wore something similar to underwear, stripping off the undergarment along with the required outer garment would redirect the shame onto "the entire system by which the debtors are

oppressed" as if to say, "Shame on you!" The teaching placed the poor laborer in control of the moment, exposing the system's exploitation of Jesus' fellow Jewish craftsmen and rural peasant farmers and shaming the powerful who take the last object of value from a sector of society which should be receiving their help. Here in *Sayings Gospel Q*, we have a 1<sup>st</sup> Century endorsement of public nudity as a valid form of radical, nonviolent protest, and the protest is designed by Jesus himself!

In our next example, Jesus teaches the oppressed to refuse to play by the rules of the game dictated by those controlling the society's domination system.

Roman law allowed soldiers to command people in the occupied territories to carry their burdens for one mile—but only one mile. This limitation provided some protection for the people as one could otherwise find oneself having carried a soldier's burden for an entire day only to end up now a day's journey away from one's home as the sun was going down.

Yet even this limitation was not good enough. We cannot be satisfied with merely accommodating the domination system; we must also refuse to cooperate with it. Remember King's words from last week: "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." So, Jesus says, when you reach the end of your first, forced mile and the soldier asks for their burden, don't give it back! Place the soldier in the position of breaking their own system's rules and perhaps being disciplined for it.

In each of these examples, the subjugated must make hard choices. They must

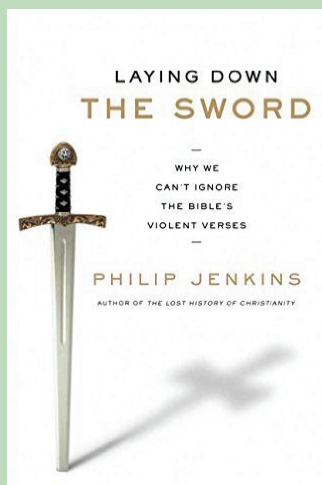
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# RHM's 2016 Annual Reading Course Book for September

## ***Laying Down the Sword: Why We Can't Ignore the Bible's Violent Verses***

by Philip Jenkins



"Philip Jenkins delivers a fearless examination of the dark and violent verses of the Bible—and a call for us to read them anew in pursuit of a richer, more honest faith. From

"one of America's best scholars of religion" (*The Economist*), this daring exploration of the Scripture's most difficult passages forces us to confront and accept the violence that was as integral to the formulation of Christianity's message as it was for many other of the world's religions, and shows us how a full understanding of the Scripture will allow us to finally move towards a more peaceful, spiritual world. Readers of Bart Ehrman's *God's Problem*, John Selby Spong's *The Sins of Scripture*, and Jenkins's own *The Jesus Wars*, as well as every Christian eager to square the recurrent violence of the Scripture with Christianity's enduring message of peace, will find these difficult questions explored in full in *Laying Down the Sword*."

### **Reviews:**

"A provocative and timely comparison of the legacies of violence in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. With verve and sweeping insight, Jenkins challenges all of our stereotypical assumptions about religion, bloodshed, and terror." (Thomas S. Kidd, author of *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution*)

"This book is a wonderful example of the kind of rigorous work Christians

must do if they are to retain intellectual credibility." (Patrick Allitt, *The American Conservative*)

"Jenkins has outdone himself. This is by far the best piece of work he has ever done, dealing with one of the most controversial issues Christians struggle with day-in and day-out." (Tony Campolo)

### **From the Back Cover:**

A New Vision for Understanding Bloodshed in the Bible

*Laying Down the Sword* brings to light biblical texts that have been hidden from view and overturns popular stereotypes that continue to generate more heat than light. Jenkins offers a way to read these troubling passages, presents a vital framework for understanding the *Bible*, and calls believers in every tradition to create a more honest and deeper-rooted faith.

Please remember, if you use Amazon to use AmazonSmile, and choose Renewed Heart Ministries as your charity, to support our work at no additional cost to yourself.

### **Happy Reading!**

[smile.amazon.com/Laying-Down-Sword-Ignore-Violent/dp/0061990728/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_swat\\_0?\\_encoding=UTF8&qid=1471961176&sr=8-1-fkmr0](https://smile.amazon.com/Laying-Down-Sword-Ignore-Violent/dp/0061990728/ref=tmm_pap_swat_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1471961176&sr=8-1-fkmr0)

## **Follow the Lamb (Weekend Edition)**

**AWC**

**Wood's Canyon Lake, AZ, USA  
June 24-25, 2016**

In June I had the pleasure of participating in AWC's annual retreat at Wood's Canyon Lake in Arizona. I was asked to be their guest and to share a "weekend version" of our larger series entitled *Follow the Lamb*.

No book in the *New Testament* evokes more intense emotion and has been the recipient of more varied interpretations than the book of *Revelation*. The language of *Revelation* is problematic on many levels. Some traditions feel that it should not have been included in the Christian cannon. One of the challenges is harmonizing *Revelation's* images with the nonviolence and hopeful inclusion believed to have been taught by the historical Jesus.



While many peace scholars believe these images cannot be harmonized, other peace scholars are attempting just that.

*Follow the Lamb* is an approach to the images

of *Revelation*, taken from these various peace-scholars' work, rooted in a compassionate eschatology. It is my belief that this book represents an attempt of an early, Jewish Jesus-Follower to harmonize what they encountered in Jesus with some of the more violent imagery of their own Hebrew Scriptures. Regardless of how one interprets the book of *Revelation*, you do have options, and it is some of the options being put forth by the peace

traditions within following Jesus that this weekend explores.

I gave four presentations:

*Following a Baby Sheep and Nonviolence*  
*The Conversion of the Nations (Part 1)*  
*The Conversion of the Nations (Part 2)*  
*The Hopeful Inclusivism of Revelation's Closing Images*

You can listen to these presentations at: [renewedheartministries.com/presentation/Follow-the-Lamb-Weekend-Edition](http://renewedheartministries.com/presentation/Follow-the-Lamb-Weekend-Edition)

I want to thank AWC for such an enjoyable weekend and for offering to fly my family out as well for this event. We, together, had a wonderful time. It is always a pleasure to spend time with your community. You have something very special happening there. Keep up the good work of leaning into, allowing yourself to be confronted and transformed by, and endeavoring to continue following more deeply the teachings of Jesus.

### Renouncing... cont'd from page 3

decide whether they are willing to use possible further personal suffering to change society rather than resort to mere retaliation. Are they willing to accept the consequences for breaking unjust laws or policies? Are they willing to cease cooperating with the present order and its rules? And as we asked last week, do they hope for their oppressors' transformation, or are they satisfied with the failing practice of tit-for-tat?

If you would like to further understand what may have been involved in this saying, again, consider reading the late Walter Wink's book *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*. In this volume, Wink shows how Jesus's teaching offered the oppressed ways to:

- Seize the moral initiative
- Find a creative alternative to violence
- Assert [their] own humanity and dignity as a person
- Meet force with ridicule or humor
- Break the cycle of humiliation
- Refuse to submit or to accept the

inferior position

- Expose the injustice of the system
  - Take control of the power dynamic
  - Shame the oppressor into repentance
  - Stand [their] ground
  - Make the Powers make decisions for which they are not prepared
  - Recognize [their] own power
  - Force the oppressor to see [them] in a new light
  - Deprive the oppressor of a situation where a show of force is effective
- (pp. 186-187)

The last section of this week's saying reminds us, once again, to trust that God will send people to take care of us when we are in need enough to let go of our self-concerned hoarding, and that we will be the people God may send today to someone else who is in need. People taking care of people, remember, is what Jesus referred to as "the reign of God" (*Sayings Gospel Q*) or "The Kingdom" (canonical gospels).

This call to trust had its own history with Jesus's Jewish culture.

Hillel, one of the most important figures in Jewish history, lived somewhere between 110BCE to 30CE. He was the first within Judaism to teach what today is referred to as the Golden Rule. Karen Armstrong in her excellent work *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions*, writes this about Hillel:

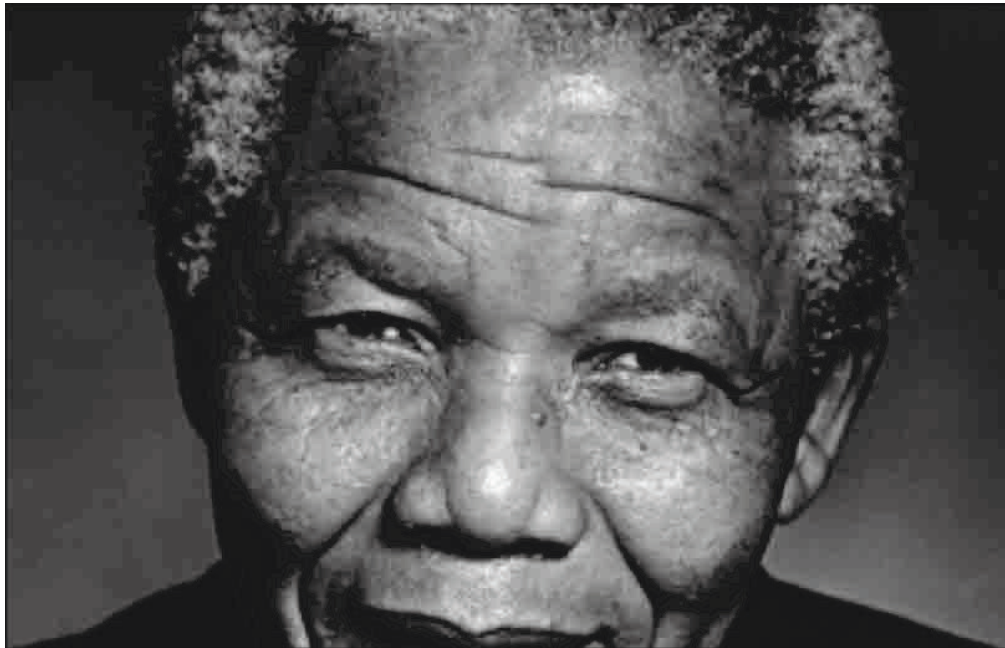
"Perhaps the greatest of the Pharisees was Rabbi Hillel (c. 80 BCE–30 CE), who migrated to Palestine from Babylonia. In his view, the essence of the *Torah* was not the letter of the law but its spirit, which he summed up in the Golden Rule. In a famous Talmudic story, it was said that one day a pagan approached Hillel and promised to convert to Judaism if the rabbi could teach him the entire *Torah* while he stood on one leg. Hillel replied simply: "What is hateful to yourself, do not to your fellow man. That is the whole of the *Torah* and the remainder is but commentary. Go learn it." (Kindle Locations 7509-7515)

The most famous of the enactments attributed to Hillel is the Prozbul. ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prozbul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prozbul))

The *Torah* included a rule of protection for the poor against ever-increasing debt. At the end of every seventh (Sabbatical) year, all debts among the Jewish people were to be cancelled. By the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, even though it was forbidden to withhold a loan before a Sabbatical year (see Deuteronomy 15:9-11), some members of the wealthy elite were unwilling to lend to poor craftsman and rural peasant farmers who needed loans to survive.

In this context, Hillel created a loophole in the Jewish law. A declaration could be made in court before a loan was executed to the effect that the law requiring the release of debts upon the entrance of the Sabbatical year would not apply to the loan to be transacted. This declaration was called the Prozbul, and it benefitted both the rich and the poor in that the poor could more easily obtain the loans they so desperately needed whenever they needed them, and the rich would more freely lend with the assurance that the capital loaned was exempted from the law's Sabbatical debt relief. (For more, read the *Jewish Encyclopedia's* entry: Prozbul.)

Where Jesus's teaching on the Golden Rule placed him squarely in the teaching



"Overcoming poverty is **not** a task of charity, it is an act of **justice**. Like Slavery and Apartheid, poverty is **not** natural. It is **man-made** and it can be overcome and eradicated **by the actions** of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. **YOU** can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom."

—Nelson Mandela; *Speech in Trafalgar Square for the campaign to end poverty in the developing world, February 3, 2005.*

Image by Festival Karsh Ottawa

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

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## Renouncing... cont'd from page 5

stream of Hillel, Jesus parts ways with Hillel on the Prozbul. (I'll talk about Jesus' relationship with the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai next week. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillel\\_and\\_Shammai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillel_and_Shammai))

Jesus taught that his followers should recklessly abandon their capital to aid those who need our help. We will study this in detail in upcoming weeks, but for now, know that to Jesus, a world under the reign of God looked like people trusting in God enough to believe that God would send others to take care of them tomorrow, so they could let go of what they were hoarding for future emergencies and take care of those whose emergencies were transpiring today.

Anxiety about the future can lead us down paths of accumulation, hoarding, greed, covetousness, jealousy, competition, and violence. It can cause us to look the other way and ignore those around us today who may be in need. But Jesus is calling us to let go of that anxiety about the future and all that it brings in its train. Let's imagine, instead, a world where, rather than individualistically accumulating in order to take care of oneself in the future, everyone trusts that if we all begin taking care of one another today, we will have a future where others take care of us. In other words, if you will take care of someone else today, you will set in motion a world where, tomorrow, someone else will take care of you.

In the words of the sayings of Jesus held dear by those first-century Jewish followers:

"To the one who asks of you, give; and from the one who borrows, do not ask back what is yours." (Q 6:29-30)

## HeartGroup Application

There are two parallel narratives we can choose to live by:

Scarcity	Abundance
Anxiety	Trust
Accumulation	Sharing
Greed	Generosity
Monopoly	Mutual Aid
Violence	Peace

1. Ponder the words in the parallel narratives above. Look up the definitions of each word. Consider how each concept leads to the next. We can live in a world where we

subscribe to scarcity, believing there is not enough to go around for everyone so we'd better look out for ourselves, or we can live in a world where as Gandhi is thought to have said, there is "enough for every person's need, but not every person's greed."

2. Discuss with your HeartGroup how the worlds created by these different narratives look. How do they differ? What are their costs? What are their benefits? Which world would you rather be a part of?
3. Make a choice. This week, make a choice to do something small or large in your life that moves you into the narrative you would rather live in.

Thanks for taking time to journey with us this month as we continue our consideration of *Sayings Gospel Q*.

I'm so glad you are with us.

Till the only world that remains is a world where love reigns. ■

\* In these cases, Jesus' instructions are NOT commands of passive non-resistance. The phrase "resist not an evildoer" could be problematic if Jesus did not then demonstrate in these stories exactly what He meant. The underlying Greek word here is *anthistemi*. It indicates resistance by returning violence for violence, overcoming evil with evil, rather than overcoming evil with good.

# Schedule

## SEPTEMBER 16-17, 2016

Adventist Forum 2016

Conference: Nonviolence and the Atonement

Silver Spring, MD, USA

916.774.1080

## OCTOBER 15 - 22, 2016

Edmonds Adventist Church

Edmonds, WA

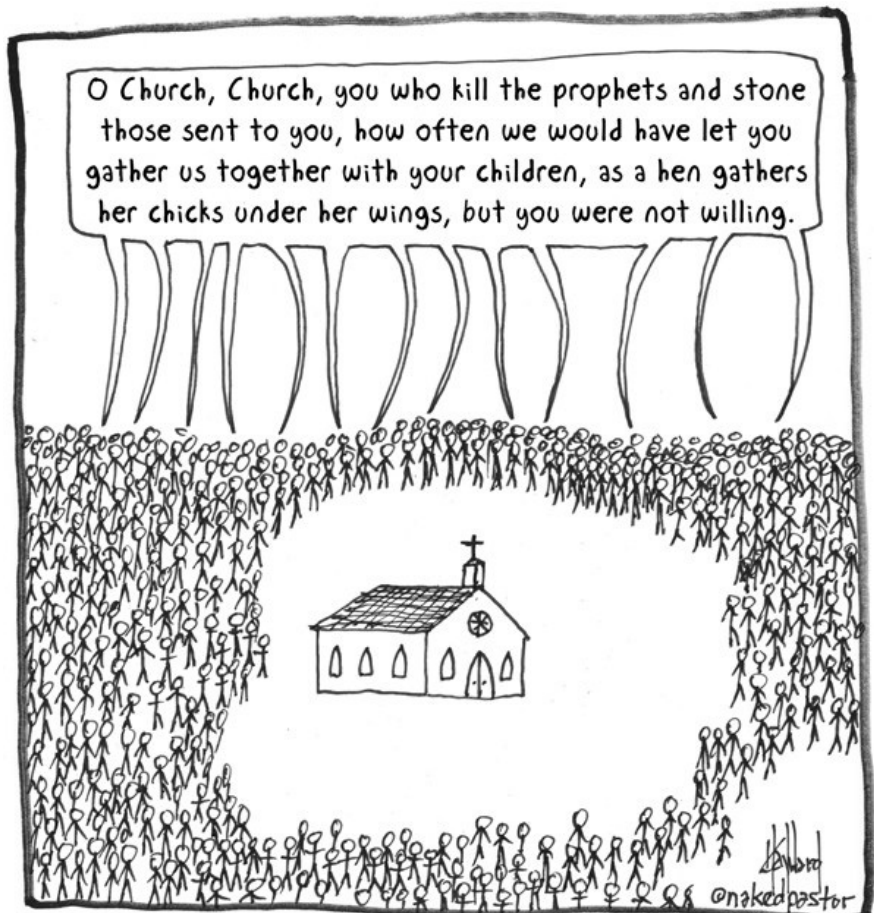
425.771.5302

## OCTOBER 28 - 29, 2016

Glendale City Church

Glendale, CA United States

818.244.7241



# A VERY BIG THANK YOU!

## Testimonies

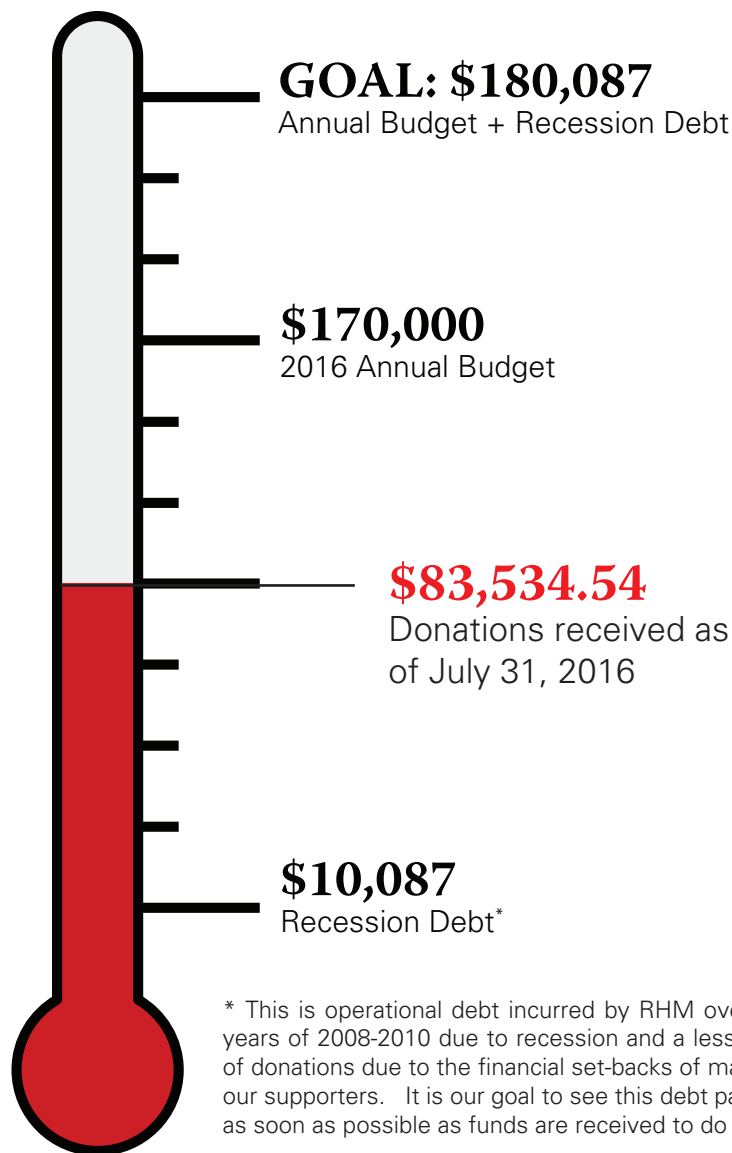
From the start we felt your authenticity and were moved by the challenging of old frightening ways of picturing Our Father. We learn so much from you and you have such a unique way of perceiving and understanding the Bible. I must admit the Revelation story still stumps me. We respect your message all the more because you have not had an easy ride through life. You really know loss and being let down and feeling deserted acutely, yet you have been able to see God as love like no other speaker I have ever heard. Thank you, Keep the faith. - L

No teacher has captured my heart and mind and agreed with my idea of what the "real Jesus" is like Herb Montgomery. His teachings, full of scripture and historical facts, bring not only comfort but healing to a world fraught with blaming and judgement. Finally, I can exhale, and experience the Jesus of love and compassion and put away self-hate and guilt. What a relief. I stand with Herb Montgomery and his ministry of Love and Acceptance. - CS

**Annual Budget as of July 31, 2016: \$99,166.20**

**Annual Contributions received as of July 31, 2016: \$83,534.54**

**April's Contributions: \$12,911.20**



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Renewed Heart Ministries is a not-for-profit group that is passionate about rediscovering, following and helping others rediscover the teachings and sayings of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. We believe these teachings have an intrinsic value in informing the work of nonviolently confronting, liberating and transforming our world into a safe, more just, more compassionate home for us all.

Everything we do here at Renewed Heart Ministries is for free. Even the many educational events that we do in various venues. If you'd like to support our work you can make a one-time gift or become one of our monthly contributors by going to [RenewedHeartMinistries.com](http://RenewedHeartMinistries.com) and clicking the donate tab at the top right.

Or you can mail contributions to:  
**Renewed Heart Ministries**  
P.O. Box 1211  
Lewisburg, WV 24901

Also, please sign up for our free resources and remember, every little bit helps.

Anything we receive over and above our annual budget we happily give away to other not-for-profits who are making both systemic and personal differences, significant differences, in lives of those not presently benefited but the status quo.

And to those already supporting the work of Renewed Heart Ministries, your generous support makes it possible for us to exist and to continue being a presence for positive change in our world. So with all of our hearts, "Thank You."

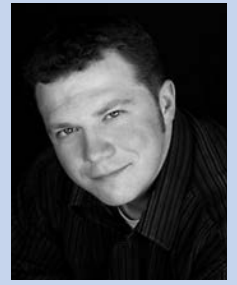
Together we are making a difference, till the only world that remains is a world where only Love reigns.



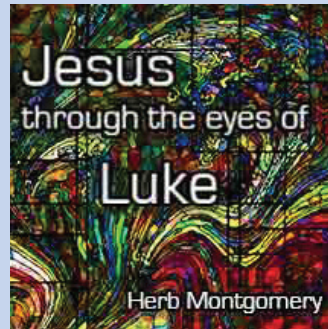
RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

## Featured Presentation

Last month I was invited to New York to share Jesus' teachings and sayings from the perspective of the gospel of Luke. The Jesus we see in Luke is not only a very earth-focused Jesus (as opposed to a focus on achieving access to a post-mortem heaven), it is a Jesus whose earth-focus is primarily aimed at the excluded, the subjugated, marginalized, disinherited of the earth. As James H. Cone



has so famously now and aptly stated, "the God we see in Jesus is a God of the oppressed."



Jesus offered meaningful wisdom toward survival, resistance, liberation and reconstruction. In short, it was a way to heal our world, or "salvation."

We will be featuring both of these presentations this and next month. We begin with part one:

***The Sayings of Jesus:  
Jesus Through the Eyes of Luke***  
by Herb Montgomery



## Quotable Quotes

*"Jesus did not advocate non-violence merely as a technique for outwitting the enemy, but as a just means of opposing the enemy in such a way as to hold open the possibility of the enemy's becoming just as well."*

— Walter Wink