

## Ministry Update cont'd from page 5

responds as we might also have responded, Jesus rebukes him and offers another strong teaching on non-violence, saying,

*"Put your sword back in its place... for all who draw the sword will die by the sword."* – Matthew 26: 52

One possible interpretation lies in the reference Jesus makes to a passage in Isaiah that he quotes in the same breath as he asks about swords. He then refers again to the fulfillment of scripture when

Peter cuts off the soldier's ear, saying:

*"Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"* – Matthew 26:53-54

Perhaps what we're missing here is the necessity for the scriptures to be fulfilled in that Christ was treated as a criminal and "numbered with

the transgressors?" This is a viable interpretation, especially in light of the response Jesus has to the act of violence itself and his constant statements that "the scriptures must be fulfilled" in this way. (Part 1 of 4)

To read parts 2-4 please check out Keith's blog at: [subversive1.blogspot.com/2011/09/jesus-prince-of-peace-part-1-of-4.html](http://subversive1.blogspot.com/2011/09/jesus-prince-of-peace-part-1-of-4.html)

Keith is from Orange County, CA and is a teacher, author, copywriter, activist, servant of Jesus, and dear friend of Herb and RHM.



## Featured Presentation

This month we'd like to feature the introductory presentation of our new series *God in the Hands of Sinners*. The presentation title is **A Ransomed World**. It was a bright summer morning in Northampton, Massachusetts, July 8, 1741. A Reformed Preacher, Jonathan Edwards, took the pulpit to preach the infamous sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. To a large degree, this sermon has shaped most of Western, Americanized Christianity today. Almost imperceptibly its undercurrent has contributed disproportionately to the present picture of God held by many. Yet the story we find within the Jesus story is not one of sinners in the hands of an angry God, but of a God in the hands of angry sinners whom He loves and would go to hell and back to rescue. If you would like to encounter God's love more fully for yourself, we want to encourage you to take advantage of this month's featured presentation, **A Ransomed World** by Herb Montgomery.



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

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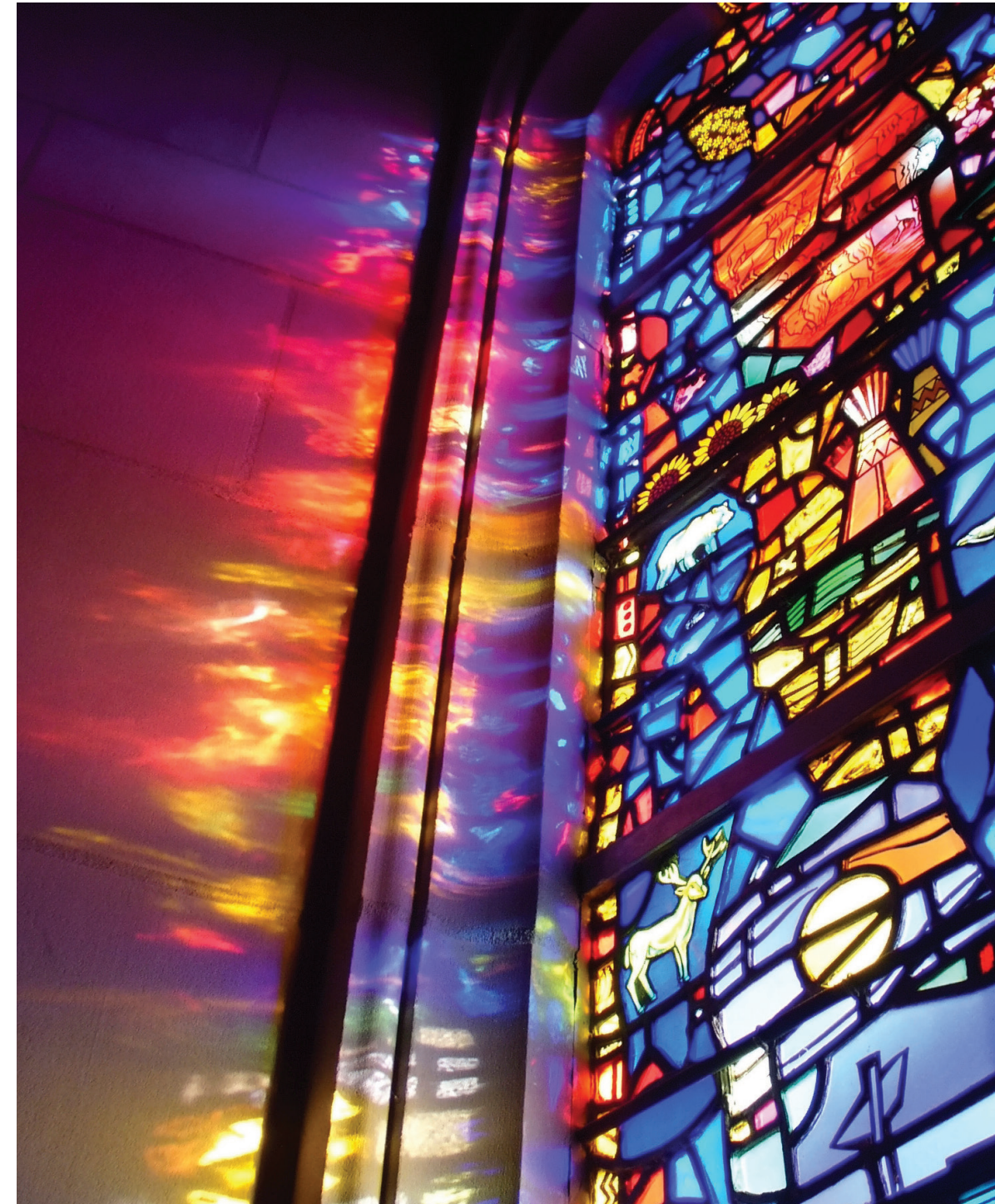
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# Awakenings

*"Only by love is love awakened."*

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries ::::: Volume 8 ::::: Issue 3 :::::



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### A God Who Looks Like Jesus

by Herb Montgomery

### Quotable Quotes

“No one has seen God. It is the only Son, who is close to the Father’s bosom, who has made him known.”

—John

*“If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works” (John 14:7-10)*

It has been a month since my mother’s death and I want to thank each of you for your patience with me during this time. I know I have been MIA; maybe one day I might share with you where Jesus and I have been over the last month. Maybe. Suffice it to say, Jesus has been very present both along with each of you and through each of you as well.

This week I want to pick back up one of the most challenging and yet life-transforming teachings of Jesus. The reason why it was (and remains to be) so controversial will not dawn upon us at first, but will take years for its profundity to really unfold before us. What is this teaching of Jesus that brings such hope and healing, and yet is fought against so vehemently by those with the best of motives? It is the simple truth that God actually looks like Jesus.

In our feature text this week, Jesus responds to Philip’s request with these words: “Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father.” This was not simply because Jesus exemplified what the Father was like. It actually

goes much deeper than that. What Jesus goes on to say is that he has simply been a conduit for the Father. That what they have been witnessing is not Jesus’ activity, but the actual activity and self-revelation of the Father himself living within and through Jesus.

On another occasion, when confronted with his not observing the Sabbath the way the Pharisees felt was in keeping with that which was religiously and politically acceptable, Jesus said to these Pharisees, *“Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes.” (John 5:19-21).*

Jesus here states emphatically that He could only do what He saw His Father doing (present tense). In other words, everything we see Jesus doing, Jesus was only able to do because He first envisioned the Father doing as well. Jesus claims to have been given special revelations of what the Father was actually like and what the Father was actually actively engaged in so that He might join and mimic the activity of the Father.

Jesus so fully revealed to us the Father that Jesus could also say on another occasion, *“And whoever sees me sees him who sent me” (John 12:45).*

Yet why was this so controversial and truly challenging for those who

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## HeartGroups Testimony

by Bonnie Norton

I was originally drawn into the simple house church model because of the concept of allowing Jesus to actually be the head of his church and encouraging the active participation of all believers. But over time, God has been leading me into a much deeper understanding of what “church” really means.

“The will of the Father for us is not to attend a bride, but to be a Bride... not to attend a house, but to be a House. We can only do this as we love each other and exchange our lives with each other every day. We help each other to know Jesus better by helping each other put away sin, love one another more, and care for others’ needs more than we care for our own. These are the teachings of Jesus. This is how He lived His life for us, and now He has called us to live this way for one another. This is how the Bride is made ready for the return of her Groom, Jesus.” – *Back to the Basics.*

It was a bit of a jolt to realize that God wanted me to live in community all day, every day—not just for a few hours once a week. This of course can be a real challenge in our Western individualistic culture that values independence and self-reliance. To live in community 24/7 can be messy, difficult, demanding, wearisome, and frustrating—something few of us really want to embrace—but it can also be incredibly rewarding!

My husband and I started off by praying for every individual in our group on a daily basis and learning to listen to that still small voice of God. As the Holy Spirit would

impress our minds, we would email or text Bible verses or words of encouragement to those brought to mind. We have also been making the effort to go visit members in their homes in times of crisis or sickness, or having them come over for a personal time of prayer and encouragement.

As I have begun reaching out in this way, I have watched individuals in our group begin to respond to this love and support in amazing ways. I see God truly taking hold of their lives and transforming them and it is really exciting to be a part of that.

(Bonnie Norton is one of Renewed Heart Ministries’ HeartGroup Coaches.)



## Testimonies

Herb, your materials have made me see God in a different way! Thank you so much. May God bless your ministry in telling others about a God who actually does love them. – **AM**

Thank you oh so much Herb! You truly are a blessing, not only to me, but to my entire church. I appreciate you coming all this way and teaching about a God who looks like Jesus. I have never viewed this so clearly before – **A**

## Schedule

**MARCH 7-16, 2014**  
Pullman Adventist Church  
Pullman, WA  
509.332.8782

**APRIL 25-27, 2014**  
Arden Adventist Church  
Arden, NC  
828.684.6700

**MAY 2-4, 2014**  
Leoni Meadows Men’s Retreat  
Grizzly Flats, CA  
530.626.3610

**MAY 16-24, 2014**  
Summersville Adventist Church  
Summersville, WV  
304.872.6958

I have so enjoyed listening to your viewpoint on seemingly cliché subjects like forgiveness! You really have me thinking now about my own beliefs and how much they look (or don’t look) like Jesus. Thank you. – **T**

RHM is really helping me experience change in the way I see God. I’ve been through similar things as Herb. You have me beginning to look at things very differently, and especially God – **MW**

# MINISTRY UPDATE

## God in the Hands of Sinners Coquitlam, BC January 17–19, 2014

Last January in Coquitlam, BC, I embarked on what was to be a two-weekend series. The first weekend (and what turned out to be the only weekend), I presented our series God in the Hands of Sinners. The weekend focuses in on Jonathan Edwards' 1781 sermon, which was entitled Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, and challenged the presuppositions of such by a comparison with the Jesus story itself. As we discovered, the story we find in the Gospels is not one that speaks of sinners in the hands of an angry God, but of a God who was found in the hands of angry sinners. To a large degree in North America, the paradigm cast by Jonathan Edwards has shaped the lens through which so many today are relating to God—if they even still believe God exists. For many, it has been a lifelong struggle to escape Edwards' paradigm. This series was another attempt to return to

the picture of God embraced by the first century church encountered through Jesus and His life, death, and resurrection. What still remains for too many to see is that the primary purpose of Jesus coming to this earth was not to liberate us from an angry God, but to deliver humanity from the powers that held us in bondage: Sin, Death, and the Accuser. Jesus did not come to satisfy a god's need for retribution, but to fulfill God's dream of restoration.

The response from this first weekend was tremendously positive. We had an excellent turnout and some really dynamite question-and-answer sessions. Unfortunately with the passing of my mother, the second weekend could not be kept but has been rescheduled for this coming October.

Thank you sincerely for partnering with us in prayer for this event. And also for your love, support, and understanding during the passing of my mother.

All my love to each of you.

### Sandra Isom Spry

August 5, 1950 –  
January 22, 2014

It is with heavy hearts that we share with you that Herb's mother has passed away. She went to her rest January 22, 2014, late afternoon. She was a wonderful woman and a true testament of Jesus' unconditional love.

Herb wants each of you to know he appreciates, so deeply, the love and compassion and the prayers that each of you have given him during this time. He did have to cancel a couple weekends, but those are being rescheduled. Please keep Herb and his family in your prayers over the upcoming months. Herb is holding close to his heart the words Jesus gave him in his prayer time just before his mother's death. "All things dark will come untrue," Jesus said. Herb is passing this on to each of you too. Wherever you are as you read this, all things dark, will one day, come untrue.

Herb thanks each of you sincerely.

With much love, we are standing with Herb and his family during this time.

Thank you for your continued prayers, love, and support.

*The Team at  
Renewed Heart Ministries.*

### A God Who... cont'd from page 2

embraced the revelation of God in the first century? Well, because quite frankly, it did not line up perfectly with all previous, and even inspired, portrayals of what God was like. The author of the New Testament letter to the Hebrews recognized this, admitted it freely, and wrote, "Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and different ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son... He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being" (Hebrews 1:1–3, emphasis added).

The words the author of Hebrews chose to use here in describing how God was revealed through the prophets of old were *polymeros* (different times) and *polytropos* (different ways). In contemporary Greek documents of the New Testament, Greek scholars agree, the meaning of *polytropos* is very close to what we would call today "multiple personalities." These ways in which God was revealed through the prophets were not only different from each other in matters of time but they were also *sometimes* very different from each other in the type of being they portrayed God to be with each other, but they even differ *at times* from the revelation of God we find in Jesus. But this is exactly the point of the author of Hebrews.



## Testimonies

"Herb, I just wanted to let you know, when you were at our church and presented Illuminating the Shadows, my son and His fiancé were there for every presentation and came away from that experience seeing through new eyes. I believe it is the beginning of a new way of seeing God and a new path to walk. Thank you for your ministry, your passion to reveal the 'other-centered, nonviolent, non-doormat, radical' love of our God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Blessings to you and your family, keep up the good work." – E

"Herb's sermons have blessed me enormously. I have downloaded nearly all of his audio files and passed them on to friends. Also,

The author is virtually saying, "I know the God revealed through the prophets looks, at times, somewhat different from this God we find revealed in Jesus, but this Jesus really is the EXACT representation of what God is truly like! He is the culmination of this story of discovery we have all been in." The early followers of Jesus had to, in some ways, go against their most fundamental religious upbringing to follow this Jesus—in more ways than one. (Just to believe a contemporary Jewish carpenter was the embodiment of the Old Testament Yahweh Himself, alone called upon the disciples of Jesus to go against how they were raised. See Leviticus 24:16 cf.

I have given a set to my previous Pastor & his wife and also my current Pastor. I have contacted Herb before, approximately 12 months or so ago...to thank him for his many, many sermons that God has blessed him with and that he has passed on to me and others. My prayer for Herb and his team is that God will continue to bless and guide him in all that he does. For the countless selfless hours he spends away from his family, to share God's awesome message—thank you, Herb... :) God Bless you." – A

Thankyou for giving me a different option than what is offered by those who are religious but really mean. I know it has a lot to do with the kind of Christianity you were raised in. You've given me hope. I too want to be a follower of this Jesus – AC

John 10:33). The disciples of Jesus had been raised on, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). And yet, God shows up and presents teachings that do not always line up perfectly with what was commanded in the law and the testimony. (See John 8:5 cf. Deuteronomy 22:22; Luke 8:46 cf. Leviticus 15:19; as well as others.)

So radical was this revelation of God within this contemporary Jewish carpenter in the first century that John, years later, could look back on it all and say that, even though he was raised with Moses and Elijah, when placed alongside the revelation of God in Jesus, "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is

## Quotable Quotes

"God, not being a bloodthirsty God, did not require or desire the sacrifice of his Son to himself. Nor was it an offering to 'pay' the devil in order to 'buy' man's freedom, since nothing was owed to the devil. But the empirical result of Christ's death was the destruction of sin, the destruction of him who had the power of death (the devil) and the destruction of death. The death of the sinless one and his resurrection, had these results."

–Gregory of Nazianzus,

a fourth century Christian theologian who was largely responsible for our understanding of Jesus being fully divine and fully human at the same time, which was established at the Council of Chalcedon.

### A God Who... cont'd from page 3

close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (John 1:18).

The apostle Paul called Jesus "the mirror image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15). Paul did not believe that Jesus was simply a revelation of one aspect of God or his character, but rather that Jesus was the revelation of God's fullness (Colossians 1:19; 2:9). The revelation of God through

Jesus should be understood as culminating and superseding all previous revelations. Paul would, through being literally knocked off his high horse, come to see that all previous revelations of God should be interpreted through the revelation of God in Jesus, rather than placed alongside Jesus. Jesus' revelation of what God is like cannot be simply blended with pre-understandings of what God is like. The revelation of God in Jesus does

not reveal one aspect of God but is the definitive revelation of God's very essence. A mistake is made when, rather than reinterpreting all biblical portraits through the lens of Jesus, other canonical portraits are placed alongside the cross and granted equal authority to reveal God (i.e., Jesus's revelation is said to reveal God's loving and merciful side, while other canonical portraits of God reveal God's "wrathful" side).

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## MINISTRY UPDATE

### Jesus, the Prince of Peace

By Keith Giles

One of the most difficult teachings of Jesus involves love. Though at first his commands to "Love God" and "Love one another" seem simple to our ears, we soon discover that living these things takes more out of us than we are prepared to give.

Lately I've been spending some time looking at the more radical teachings of Jesus regarding non-violence and how it informs our practice of the Christian faith.

If you only learn one thing from Jesus in the Gospels it's that he expects his followers to be known as people who love with extravagance. Jesus teaches his disciples to not only love those who love them, but to also love even their enemies and to bless those who curse them.

Love, above all else, is the defining characteristic of a true follower of Jesus.

### BUT WHAT ABOUT...?

Some Christians today flat out ignore the dozens of verses from the mouth of Jesus regarding love and the practice of peace and look instead at one or two verses to base their theology upon. This is largely endorsed by a certain segment of Christians who teach a decidedly Americanized form of Christianity, one fueled by politics and infused with an heretical twisting of the words of Jesus to conform to those of the Founding Fathers of our Nation. These America First Christians teach that the United States is God's favored nation. They teach, either outright or by inference, that God loves America more than He loves the rest of the world and justify the use of force to advance American interests in the name of God and country. They even endorse torture and believe that Jesus would approve of it.

This is one of the main reasons I so vehemently oppose the politicized version of American Christianity. Because it distorts the pure Gospel of Jesus and attempts to mix such opposing

ideas as "take up your cross daily and die to yourself" with "the pursuit of happiness."

Even more, this Americanized brand of Christianity aligns the Gospel with a specific political party and equates loyalty to one with righteousness and justification in the other. In many ways, the two concepts are tightly intertwined and many cannot imagine following Jesus apart from pledging allegiance to the party.

Not that Christians shouldn't exercise their freedom to vote or to stand for justice, mind you. Those are wonderful opportunities and I applaud those who take the time to do their civic duty and participate in politics. There is a time and a place for this.

However, whenever we begin to place our allegiance to Christ beneath the shadow of a political party or system, we have jumped the tracks. Whenever we are more passionate about our candidates or our political issues than we are about the Gospel of the Kingdom, we are off base.

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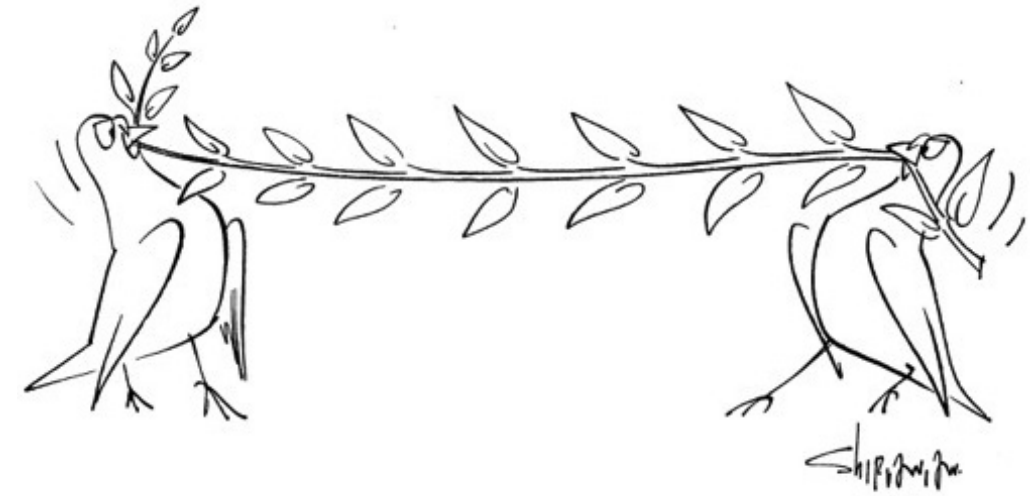
### A God Who... cont'd from page 4

Jesus instead redefines everything.

Why is this challenging to so many? Because in Jesus we find the coming of a God preaching nonviolence as the way to heal this world's wrongly constructed social structures. We find a God redefining justice, parable after parable, not as retributive or punitive, but rather as restorative. We find a God who seems to exude, even overflow, with this inclusive favor even for those the law, the teachers of the law, and the politically conservative but theologically liberal group called the Pharisees said should be stoned or, at bare minimum, marginalized. To truly meet the God found in the Jesus within the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is to truly be confronted with a sincere question: Do we really love the God we find within this Jesus found in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, or are we simply loving the deified projection of our own political and religious opinions, much like those of Jesus' own day, yet placed before our own cultural backdrop today?

*"With all wisdom and insight God has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth"* (Ephesians 1:9-10, emphasis added). Until that day, keep following Jesus, keep allowing Jesus to challenge your picture of God, reshaping not only your concept of God's character, but re-forming each of us into that very kind (no pun intended) of being as well. Till the only world that remains, is a world where love reigns.

I love you guys. ■



### Ministry Update cont'd from page 4

Whenever we begin to judge someone's salvation based on whether they vote the way we do, we are misguided. Whenever we find it impossible to imagine following Christ apart from being a good Republican or Democrat, we have another Jesus and we have embraced a false Gospel.

### ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT, ONE CHURCH

Most of our brothers and sisters in this world today are found in communist or socialist nations such as North Korea or China or in continents such as Africa or Asia. If someone hears the Gospel in one of these nations and receives Christ as Lord and Savior, do they then also become a Republican at the same time? No, of course not. But if the majority of Christians in this world, who make up the largest segment of our body, are not also good Americans or faithful Democrats or Republicans, then it must be possible for us to divorce our politics from our faith in Christ. Not only must it be possible, it must be accomplished in order for us to see clearly who our Lord

is and what it means to fully die to ourselves and follow Him alone.

### GO AND BUY A SWORD

Some have recently questioned me regarding whether or not Jesus really taught such a radical form of non-violence in the Gospels. They reference one verse where Jesus asked his disciples to go and buy a sword because "this scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." (See Luke 22:35-38)

It's easy to read this passage and simply conclude that it is an endorsement of violence in the name of self-defense. Yet, one must take into account all the many other teachings of Jesus regarding turning the other cheek, loving our enemies, and not resisting an evil man.

Is this passage an example of Jesus making an allowance for violence in the name of self-defense? Perhaps. Although two swords are hardly enough to protect 13 people. And furthermore, when the soldiers arrive to arrest Jesus and Peter

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