

*terrorism against the West.* While I agree that some Muslims have and will engage in clear and horrific acts of terror, it doesn't follow that we should therefore stop loving our enemies. In fact, this may be the best argument for loving them. Could it be that this is our best, and possibly only, weapon against potential future terrorists? Could it be that if they personally experience the love of Jesus from one of His followers, they would not engage in such activity? Very possibly. I am not naïve. Several times my family and I have been the focus of violent actions by those who bear the label "Muslim." Evil is real, and it has a root – our one and only Enemy with whom we cannot reconcile – the Devil.

- 3) "Love doesn't always work against such people." If we're using "love" as a strategy to "get them", then it won't work. But if we love our enemies because God does, and if our hearts are soft towards them because we see God weeping over them, the effect is direct and powerful.



Love is by far the most powerful and forceful weapon we have at our disposal. It is not wimpy. It's not naïve. It led to the most violent, non-passive, act in history – the Cross. Love does not roll over and lay down. Love conquers all.

So, if you're still with me, *here are three steps for employing this strategy of Jesus:*

- 1) Take time to think about who your actual enemies are. It could include an in-law, a physical neighbor, even an enemy of the State – the Bin Laden variety. Then engage that person emotionally and spiritually. In other words, force yourself to think about him or her. Imagine what his or her life is like. Why is he the way he is? Now pray for him. Allow God to begin to place compassion and insight into your heart for that person, and to give you perspective. This is critical if you are going to make it to step two. And, by the way, this first step takes a ton of spiritual maturity on our part. Because, if someone is your enemy, you don't want to do this. But do it anyway!
- 2) Begin to ask God for a plan, for a specific strategy for meeting this person and talking to him or her. I didn't show up at the Hezbollah leader's office without first taking a lot of time to think, pray and plan how I would do that

## A Unique Solution to Evil in the World

VINCENT J. DONOVAN

The following is excerpted, by permission, from *Christianity Rediscovered*, by Vincent J. Donovan (Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 2004, pp. 125-126).

If we take seriously the words and life of the man from Galilee, we are driven to the conclusion that his was a unique solution to evil in the world, a different kind of solution altogether, an unacceptable solution by any political standards: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you." Jesus spoke without fear against hypocrisy and injustice and corruption into the very teeth of his enemies. His fervor led him to peaks of anger as he physically scattered the men and beasts and goods which were desecrating the temple and the very notion of religion. But this action of his neither purified

the temple nor renewed the sense of religion nor did it obliterate evil or bring justice to the world. In the final analysis, the message of the New Testament, the message that passes from Jesus to us, is that the only way to overcome evil is to give into it. Overcome it he did, beginning with death which he turned into resurrection.

In his case, he could not have overcome death by violently struggling against it, or by disputing with Pilate or Caiaphas over the injustice of it all, and thus avoiding it altogether. It can be argued that his was a singular case, and a singular solution, and that it is not applicable to others, and to us. Singular

and what I would say once I was there. If you don't plan for this, it won't happen. So make it real. Make it practical. I am currently planning to meet some other high-profile enemies so that I can continue my quest of obeying Jesus in everything. And I pray that I will have the courage and the words to say what God gives me to say when the time comes.

- 3) Go. Across the street. Around the world. But you have to go. It's not rocket science for a reader like you. I'm guessing you've traveled before. You've been in cross-cultural situations and gone out of your comfort zone. This is simply one step further. You're now going to meet an actual enemy.

Think about it. What's the worse thing that could happen to you? "I could be killed," you say. But you're going to die anyway, so seriously, what's the worst thing? I think the worst thing is this – you fly halfway around the world to meet "Mr. Bad Guy," and you show up at his doorstep, and he isn't there to meet you. In that case, you wander around a bit and come back the next day. If he never shows up, you've had a good time of prayer and maybe have made some new, unexpected friends. Not so bad, really!

Oh, and by the way, the last time I was having tea with the Hezbollah, here's what I said: "Have you ever thought about employing the strategy of Jesus

in relation to Israel? It's simple, has immediate impact and can be done unilaterally. You can do it right now, all by yourself. You can forgive them. Love them. Start doing good things to them. Bless them. Pray for them. It will annoy and confuse them as much as anything else you've ever done. What do you think?"

The Hezbollah leader's reply? "Carl, Carl, Carl. I know this is the way of Jesus, but it won't work with them. They will simply abuse this kind of niceness, and then where will we be?"

Undeterred, I asked, "So how is your current strategy working? I mean, what do you have to lose?"

He looked down and said, "You know, I'm not sure I have the courage to do this. It might cost me everything."

"Thank you for your honesty, sir," I said. "It cost Jesus everything, too."

Then we prayed. We gathered around him and prayed. We prayed for wisdom. For courage. For honor. For him to do the right thing, the thing Jesus would do. And, well, who knows? It just might work. Because in this case, the "it" is Jesus! <sup>f</sup>

it was, but it stands nonetheless as the only solution to evil offered in the New Testament.

Even beyond his death, when we think of the other issues that were at stake at the time—the issues of justice and innocence and guilt, the question of the meaning of truth and of earthly and non-earthly kingdoms, the matter of the identity of the Messiah and of the true meaning of religion—we have to ask ourselves: who really triumphed? Jesus or Pilate? Jesus or the High Priest? Jesus or the Roman soldiers? Jesus or the Roman Empire?

There will always be a cross somewhere in the midst of the Christian solution to evil, a cross of the pain involved in not returning blow for blow; a cross of the natural, human bitterness felt in the experiencing of hatred and returning love in its place, of receiving evil and doing good; a cross reflected in the near impossibility

of counting oneself blessed in the midst of persecution, or of hungering and thirsting for justice, or in being merciful and peacemakers in a world which understands neither. Between us and fulfillment, between us and everlasting justice, between us and salvation of this suffering world, there will always stand the paradox of the cross, a cross not for others, but for us. "The Jews are looking for miracles and the pagans for wisdom. And here we are preaching a crucified Christ, to the Jews an obstacle they cannot get over, to the pagans madness" (1 Cor. 1: 22-23).

There is, on the one hand, a moral, human, political solution to evil in the world. And there is a Christian solution. The gospel, which contains the latter, will always be compromised by identifying it with the former. <sup>f</sup>