



# Awakenings

*"Only by love is love awakened."*

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries ::::: Volume 6 ::::: Issue 9 :::::

***Wow, 2012 has gone by in a flash. So much has taken place this year for Renewed Heart Ministries. This year, during the holiday season, I want to stop and simply say "Thank you!" to you, our supporters, for making 2012 the best year yet for RHM!***

***Here is a sampling of just some of the highlights of this year that I am especially excited about:***

## **HeartGroups**

First, at the top of my list for 2012 is the creation of our new HeartGroups. HeartGroups are home gatherings patterned after the open, mutually participatory nature of the New Testament gatherings where we can share life together, putting on display the beauty of who God is to the world around us. The aim of a HeartGroup is to provide an environment marked by mutual love, mutual fellowship, mutual dependence, mutual honor, mutual submission, mutual dwelling, and authentic community.

If this sounds like something you'd be interested in please check it out at:

<http://www.renewedheartministries.com/HeartGroups.aspx>

And for more information on what a HeartGroup is and what it is not, please see the eSight series on our website published between the dates October 9, 2012 and November 30, 2012 (<http://www.renewedheartministries.com/Esights>).

## **eSight Series**

In addition to the eSight series on HeartGroups, there are also two more eSight series from 2012 that I want to point out. Both were pivotal this year for us as a ministry and I believe that if you have not read them already, they will both be a tremendous blessing to you as this year comes to a close.

The first is the "Christus Victor" series, published between February 22, 2012 and March 12, 2012

The second is the eleven-part series on the peace teachings of Jesus entitled "The Active Non-violence of Jesus." These were published between May 27, 2012 and October 3, 2012.

## **New Online Series!**

Also, this year we published a few new series that we are now offering for free download on RHM's website. Included in these are the three presentations I had the privilege of giving on the campus of Princeton University. You can find them at the following links:



### **Princeton University:**

<http://www.renewedheartministries.com/AudioPresentationSeries.aspx?series=28>

### **The Awakening:**

<http://www.renewedheartministries.com/AudioPresentationSeries.aspx?series=27>

By love is love awakened. That the world might be won back to God, the deceptive power of the lies surrounding His character had to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's kingdom. He desires only the service of love and love cannot be commanded. It cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. His character must be manifested. Only one being in all the universe could do this work. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Only one could say, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father" (John 14:9). When we begin to see God through the radical lens of Jesus Christ, not only does love begin to define and shape everything we believe, but it also revolutionizes all the ways we relate to others in our daily lives, even our enemies. Love is more than a concept. It's a way of life. And only by love is love awakened (Ephesians 5:1,2; 1 John 4:19).

### **Forgive Us Our Trespasses:**

<http://www.renewedheartministries.com/AudioPresentationSeries.aspx?series=29>

Some of the most significant, relationally inhibiting misconceptions of God in our modern culture are the misunderstandings that surround the subject of divine forgiveness. We relate to God and to others the way we, in our hearts, perceive God relates to us. Does God really

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# MINISTRY UPDATE

## HeartGroups Testimonies

I received this recently from a host of one of our new HeartGroups. I was so touched by seeing that this style of gathering is happening, I thought I would share it along with this ministry update:

*"After our supper Friday evening we gathered in the living room for our meeting. One of our sisters was absent due to not feeling well. We commented how much we missed her and her husband, and someone spontaneously prayed for her and her husband as her caregiver. As we started to share our week together, someone asked another member how she was doing. She has also been struggling with health issues. She shared how she has been very depressed of late and doesn't seem to really care if she gets better or not. We immediately stopped the conversation and once again had prayer together over her, asking God to restore to her the joy of living. A request was made to sing 1 John 4:7-8 "Beloved, let us love one another." After the song another member excitedly shared how just the evening before he had been studying that very verse and he then proceeded to share for about 20 minutes what that verse has meant to him.*

*Several more songs followed, with individuals sharing why those songs held special meaning for them. Another individual shared a heartache he was carrying and once again we stopped for spontaneous prayer. Then this same individual read a story he had brought to share with the group, that God had impressed*

*him with during the week. Believe it or not, it fit perfectly in with the theme of 1 John 4. After he read the story we burst into song again. There was a lot more sharing in and around all this.*

*While we did not have an agenda for the evening, I believe God definitely did, because He seemed to be impressing everyone with the same message. I guess this is what happens when you allow your worship to be God led instead of man led. We just have to learn to be tuned in."*

If you too would like to know how you can be a part of a HeartGroup near you, please contact us on the web at:

<http://www.renewedheartministries.com/HeartGroups.aspx>

## Albuquerque, NM

This October, I had the immense privilege of spending ten days in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I had met many of the members of this church two years ago in Arizona and then had spent a weekend in their church as a result, a little over a year ago. Returning to Albuquerque was more like a "family reunion" than simply a ten-day event (Thanks, guys for taking me to see the balloons at the Balloon Fiesta. They were beautiful).

God's spirit was poured out each night as we, centered on Jesus, gave intentional openness to encountering God's radical, self-sacrificial, other-centered love in its mirror-image-form found in Jesus Christ.

And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror [in Jesus], are being

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withhold forgiveness until we apologize? Which comes first, repentance and confession or forgiveness? Does a loving God require us to ask Him before He'll forgive? How can God require us to forgive those who have wronged us, even those who have never asked to be forgiven, if He Himself doesn't even give blanket forgiveness to everyone, too? What does forgiveness even mean? When we place the transparency of the life of Jesus over these questions, a new dimension to our understanding begins to emerge. Did Jesus really mean, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father" and what does this mean when we apply it to what we believe about God's forgiveness? If you have ever wrestled with truly feeling that you are forgiven, this series is for you. If you have ever wrestled with truly forgiving others who have hurt you, this series is for you too. Have your heart set free, as you encounter God and experience His radical, self-sacrificial, other-centered forgiveness as you never have before. Experience the difference it makes when we embrace the truth that Jesus is the exact "Image" of what God is like, especially in relation to divine forgiveness (Hebrews 1:1-3; John 1:18; Matthew 5:44,45).

### The *NEW* Life Unlimited Series:

<http://www.renewedheartministries.com/AudioPresentationSeries.aspx?series=30>

Next year, we will hit the ground running with lots of travel, seminars, projects, and events. 2013 is already shaping up to look like a pretty exciting year! Also, we have a new sharing book coming out, published by the Review and Herald, in the fall of 2013. We'll keep you posted on all the details as the fall draws closer.

***Thank you for your continued support of Renewed Heart Ministries as we partner together to put on display the radical, other-centered, self-sacrificial, indiscriminate, love of God as seen in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, reproduced once again in the communal lives of His followers, as we proclaim, in relationally responsible, intellectually honest, and culturally relevant ways the last message of mercy to our world today: the revelation of God's character of love.***

*Herb*

transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit . . . Christ, who is the image [mirror-image] of God (2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 4:4).

I was so deeply humbled, once again, to see lives changed and hearts transformed as we came to know more fully over this ten-day event what Jesus' kingdom is genuinely all about. Truly, Christ's kingdom was enlarged.

If you would like to listen to this series you can find if for free download at:

<http://www.renewedheartministries.com/AudioPresentationSeries.aspx?series=30>

This is the new "Life Unlimited" series. Our prayer here at RHM will be that as you listen, you will also encounter God's love for you more deeply as we all come to a deeper understanding of the length, depth, breadth, height, and width of who and what our God truly is, as seen in Jesus.

It is life giving! Life without limit. Life unlimited.

Also, the highlight of my visit to New Mexico was being able to establish a HeartGroup right outside of Albuquerque. Such beautiful things are happening among this small group. If you happen to be reading this, to the HeartGroup that meets in the house of "Aquila and Priscilla," grace and peace to you from Him who did not consider heaven itself a place to be desired while we were held captive by God's enemy. You are loved by Him who defines love. Keep living in love and may His love in you for one another continue to grow more and more until that perfect day. Keep enlarging Jesus' kingdom, one relationship at a time. You are in my prayers, always.

## **Burlington, WA**

Although there are so many beautiful pastors out there I get the opportunity to work with, it is rare for me to work with a pastor who so deeply "gets," on a theological level, what we at RHM are really all about. I had the privilege of basking in this opportunity in Burlington, WA earlier this month. It was a tremendous weekend and one I cherish as 2012 comes to an end.

The congregation was so warm. Truly, God's love is present among within this church. For an institutional-style church [wink, wink], God's kingdom is alive and growing in this local church. They have these beautiful groups lovingly referred to as "Family Trees" which are simply small groups where the "one anothers" of the New Testament are understood and practiced. These groups are deeply involved with their community, with a level engagement and integration that is rare these days. Recently, one of the officials of one of the town's largest charity organizations told them that if this church was not present in their town, the charity would honestly have had to close their doors. There was no way they could do what they do without that church's involvement and

participation. Way to put on display the radical beauty of who God is, guys! Who God is, as revealed in Jesus, is consistently presented from the leadership of this church and the fruit among your members is amazingly stunning. Keep enlarging the kingdom!

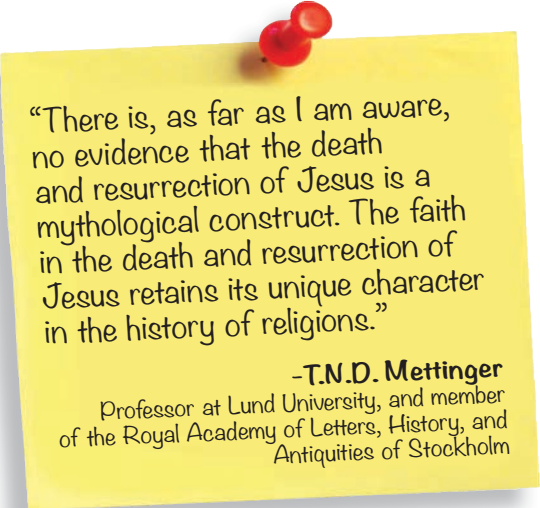
## **Edmonds, WA**

There is a core group in this church that has been profoundly impacted by the book I wrote a couple of years ago, *Finding The Father*. They give this book away for free in their lobby (I always love it when we do things for free!). This core group is passionate about seeing God for who He is and putting that on display for the world to see. On a deeply personal note, it was refreshing to me to end my year with a group who also feel like family.

The Pastor of this church has also had to make some pretty difficult calls on the direction of this church over the past few years, decisions that were the result of a deep desire to follow Jesus. And just as anyone knows who is following Jesus, the reason the followers of Jesus hope in the resurrection is because following Jesus always results in putting them on a cross. This church has been through the "cross" phase (although I believe it deepens for all of us every step of the way) and now is experiencing a little taste of the power of the resurrection in the congregation and it is beautiful. As an outsider visiting your church, I see "kingdom" there in your congregation in large measure and I'm so encouraged by it. It is my hope that you will be encouraged, too!

Half-way through the week, I decided to make the talks I gave in this church available online, grouping them together under the title, "The Sufficiency of Christ." The week's presentations just came together. We are not to look to our religion for our picture of God, what we are to believe, or how we are to live. Neither are we to look to our political opinions for that which defines us, that which gives us assurance and security.

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"There is, as far as I am aware, no evidence that the death and resurrection of Jesus is a mythological construct. The faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus retains its unique character in the history of religions."

**-T.N.D. Mettinger**  
Professor at Lund University, and member  
of the Royal Academy of Letters, History, and  
Antiquities of Stockholm

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Jesus is our example, teacher, friend, redeemer, and Lord. He is the source of our life, the central reference point for our faith and lifestyle, for our understanding of "church," and our engagement with society. We are committed to following and worshipping Jesus.

Christ is our definitive clue in regards to what God is like.  
Christ is our doctrine.

Christ is our new standard of what morality even looks like.  
Christ is what is to define us, inside and out.  
And Christ is sufficient!

This church, just like other churches, already has present among them many small groups. I was so stoked to find this. Although I encouraged these groups to begin moving away from what some call a "Honey, I shrunk the church" style (where those present are still simply passive spectators) to a more open, mutually participatory style mirrored in the New Testament ekklesia, I was also simply thankful to see such openness to God's radical love and his other worldly Kingdom in Edmonds. I love what I see happening here! Certainly Jesus Christ is alive enough to still lead those who used to belong to God's enemy. Long live the beautiful revolution! Christ's kingdom come. May God's eternal desire (Genesis 1:26; John 17) for us be restored among us once again, just as it is, in heaven (Matthew 5:10).

### New North American Sharing Book for 2014

Lastly, this past month, I finished the final edits for the North American Division Sharing Book for 2014, entitled *Missing Dad*, published by the Review and Herald. It will be on bookshelves in the fall of 2013. The first half of this volume is a condensed version of the chapters found in my book *Finding the Father* that so many have found helpful concerning our misconceptions of God and the role He plays in human suffering. The second half of this volume is dedicated to the Cross and Victory of Christ, and what the Cross, as seen through the perspective of Jesus, tell us about who and what God really is and what He deeply feels for each one of us. I am so excited to be offering this content in this format in an effort to allow Jesus once again to challenge not simply our culture's misperceptions of what God is like, but even some of our religion's (Christianity's) most cherished, but nonetheless incorrect, pictures of God, as well. Jesus said it best: "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father" (John 14:9). We'll keep you posted with more updates as the publishing date gets closer.

I love you guys.

Keep enlarging the Kingdom, one relationship at a time!

## Featured Presentation



This month, during the holiday season, Herb will share an eSight series on whether or not Jesus actually existed, whether we can trust the canonical stories concerning this person, and if so, what are the life, teachings, death and resurrection of such a person saying to us about what type of a being "God" really is. We could think of no better presentation to feature that goes along with this eSight series this month as so many are focusing on the birth of this Jesus than this presentation given by Herb last spring at Princeton University. If what Herb is saying is true, and the Jesus story really did take place, you could not possibly be more loved than you are right now at this very moment! The Christmas story is more than legend. It's more than myth. It's more than borrowed parallelism from ancient mystery religions. It is our prayer that your heart will once again be renewed as you listen to this month's featured presentation, *Why Think This Is True?* by Herb Montgomery.

## Schedule

### JANUARY 11-13, 2013

Naperville Adventist Church,  
Naperville, IL  
708.514.5723

### JANUARY 18-20, 2013

Raymond Adventist Church  
Franksville, WI  
262.878.5133

### JANUARY 25-27, 2013

Summersville Adventist Church  
Summersville, WV  
304.872.6958

### FEBRUARY 8-10, 2013

Battleford Adventist Church  
North Battleford, SK, CAN  
306.445.9096

### FEBRUARY 22 - MARCH 2, 2013

Paradise Adventist Church  
Paradise, CA  
530.877.4454

### MARCH 8-16, 2013

Raymond Adventist Church  
Franksville, WI  
262.878.5133

### APRIL 8-12, 2013

Shenandoah Valley Academy  
New Market, VA  
540.740.3161

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**Renewed Heart Ministries**  
**P.O. Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901**

Contributions can also be made online at:  
[www.renewedheartministries.com](http://www.renewedheartministries.com)

\*All donations will receive a tax-deductible receipt.

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