



Awakenings

"Only by love is love awakened."

..... The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries Volume 8 Issue 1



Inside This Issue:

Page 2

The Egalitarian World
of the Kingdom

Page 3

Testimonies

Page 5

Servant God

Page 6

Ministry Update:
What If Jesus Could Be
You For 24 Hours?

Page 7

HeartGroups Testimony:
What is a HeartGroup?
Schedule

Page 8

Testimonies
Featured Presentation

Renewed Heart Ministries
P.O. Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901
Phone: 304.520.0030
Email: info@renewedheartministries.com

Follow RHM!



@RenewedHeartMin



Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery



The Egalitarian World of the Kingdom

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

“No solution, no matter how creative or high powered, can succeed if you have defined the problem incorrectly. Put differently: more important than giving the right answers is asking the right questions...Simply changing the materials, programs, and activities is not enough. We must change how we perceive the church, how we see God expressing Himself in the world through the church, and how we do church.”

—William A. Beckham;
Finding Organic Church
by Frank Viola

“But you are not to be called Rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.”
Matthew 23:8-12

Well, the New Year is upon us, and we here at RHM have hit the ground running. For the next few weeks, in our eSights and podcasts, we’re going to be cycling through some different aspects of the Reign of Christ—which, as I look around at the societal landscape now, I feel we are especially called to put on display. Remember, we are not called to force the Reign of Christ (Earth’s new King) on anyone: the Kingdom of God is without coercion. What we are called to do is to put on display what the world changed by the Reign of Christ looks like and invite others to embrace Him too as their new King.

This week, I want to take a look at Jesus’ words in Matthew 23:8-12. The phrase I want to zero in on is, *“Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah.”* Jesus had just said, *“You are not to be called Rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students.”* What Jesus is commissioning us to put on display is a community characterized by humble egalitarian relationships rather than hierarchical ones. In all actuality, Jesus was death to any person using hierarchical authority over another: *“But Jesus called them to him and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.’”* Matthew 20:25-26

According to the Hebrew creation narrative, hierarchical relationships are a fruit of the relational schisms that took place in the garden; they are not reflective of original creation (Genesis 1:26 mentions authority over creation, but not authority over others.) Even in a perfect state, the narrative seems to hint at humanity’s inability to exercise authority over one other. Nor are they reflective of the new creation that has come through Jesus. (See 2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV.)

The early followers of Jesus understood this vision. Notice Paul’s description of how the church that met in Corinth functioned: *“When you come together, each of you has a hymn or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation.”* (1 Corinthians 14:26, emphasis added) The gatherings of the early church, historical scholars agree, were not ones where the majority sat passively silent while the same person taught every week. These were communities that embraced the priesthood of all believers, each one possessing a gift to share that would contribute to and build up the body. They saw themselves as having only one teacher (the Messiah), and they were all humble students, together, showing each other what Jesus was teaching them. They met to encourage each another to continue following Jesus and to build each other up. These were communities where following the “one-anothers” of the New Testament could be practiced as well as put on display for the world around them to see.

This is a far cry from how church gatherings function today. And although a more thorough treatment of the differences must wait for a later time, today gatherings are characterized much more by passive

cont’d on page 3

Testimonies

Herb, I just want to say thank you for your presence on Facebook in recent weeks. I'm not gifted with words, so I can't write long, flowing accolades, but I want you to know that you ARE appreciated, and that plenty of us are listening, learning, and taking to heart your words about love, forgiveness and acceptance, and that you are lifted up in prayer daily. Simply put, thank you for being Jesus' biggest cheerleader! – JRB

"I heard Herb Montgomery speak recently and was blown away. I don't consider myself an Adventist anymore and don't really feel drawn to organized religion. And I've become a bit of a skeptic when it comes to church. But I'm glad I listened to the recommendation of my friend Daneen Akers to give him a try. I've never seen anyone in the Adventist church—any church, for that matter, outside the black church—preach like he does, with the fervor of an evangelist and the theology of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And his own journey is pushing him to expand his views on LGBT issues. An exciting voice to emerge out of Adventism." – HI

Egalitarian World... cont'd from page 2

spectatorship at a service or program by the majority of attendees, rather than being small open, mutually participatory gatherings where each person is exercising his or her God-given gift. To be sure, some are gifted teachers; yet any arrangement where the same teacher is heard from week after week robs the church of others whom the spirit has gifted as well.

The early followers of Jesus believed that together, they equally became a dwelling place for God. (See Ephesians 2:22, where the "you" is plural, not singular, and 1 Peter 2:4-8.) They believed that together, they were functioning here on Earth as the visible "body of Christ," with only Christ as their "head" (Ephesians 4:15)—not "lording" authority over each other, but humbly and lovingly serving one another. In this way, they, as a community, believed that

together, they were partaking of the "divine nature" (see 2 Peter 1:4) and that "all of them" were "one," just as the Father was in Christ and as Christ was in the Father. "They" saw themselves in Them. (See John 17:20-21.)

The body metaphor used by Paul is especially telling when taken with Jesus' words in Matthew 23. When our head signals to our hands, it doesn't first signal the arm to tell the hands to move; neither must the hand submit to the arm in order for it to obey the head. Anyone who has a working knowledge of human anatomy knows that this isn't even remotely how the physical body works. The brain sends direct signals to those body parts it seeks to influence; consequently, the head controls all of the body's parts immediately and directly. It doesn't pass its impulses through a chain-of-command scheme invoking other body parts along the way.

It must be noted here that each body part must be connected to the head for the head to communicate with each part directly, as well as being a part of the actual body itself. (There are no rogue parts: to be severed is to die.) But it is exactly for this reason that this metaphor works! The proper application of the body metaphor preserves the unvarnished truth that in the world changed by Jesus, there is no hierarchical authority practiced by Jesus' followers over other of His followers. There is only one source of authority in the church: Jesus Christ. All members are connected to each other equally by His life, and together they are directly under His control. Jesus Christ is the head of the body, and He is the only mediator providing a direct line from God to each body part as a part of the overall body. (1 Timothy 2:5) Members of Christ's body, although they serve one another, do not need any mediator other than Jesus Himself to tell them how to know God and follow Him.

Note these words written by the author of the letter to the Hebrews: *"But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one.... 'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah. IT WILL NOT BE LIKE THE COVENANT*



cont'd on page 4

I made with their ancestor when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt.... This is the covenant I will establish with the House of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I WILL PUT my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I WILL BE their God, and they will be my people. NO LONGER WILL THEY TEACH THEIR NEIGHBORS, or say to one another, "Know the Lord," because THEY WILL ALL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST OF THEM TO THE GREATEST.'" (Hebrews 8:6-11).

It is mutual submission (i.e., being submitted to one another and then together to Christ), not hierarchical submission (i.e., being submitted to someone else as they are submitted to someone else who has submitted themselves to Christ), that engenders the proper coordination of the body of Christ. (For more on the topic of Hierarchical Authority in the New Testament, please see: renewedheartministries.com/Sermons/jesusdialogue2/outlines/16hierarchy.pdf).

All of the foregoing brings us to our point, the aspect of Christ's reign that we are looking at this week. We are not called to put on display simply a religious version of the corporate structures of this world. On the contrary, Jesus is inviting us to experience (and then to put on display) a world where, rather than exercising power over others, we—together, as a community—come under His authority, each of us together learning how to listen to Him. And instead of "lording" power or position over each other, we learn what it means and what it looks like to serve each other with humble servant love.

In short, this is a community that is learning how to practice the "one-anothers" themselves and then extending the invitation to the world



to practice this beautiful way of doing life here on Planet Earth as well.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13:34, cf. John 15:15)

HeartGroup Application

Today it is no secret that the non-hierarchical, open, mutually participatory nature of the early church is rarely seen, much less experienced, by those who attend what is labeled incorrectly in our Western society as "church." To be honest, it's just easier to show up, sit up, and shut up, and let someone else do all teaching and sharing while I simply sit there and allow myself to be fed. If that's what someone prefers, that's okay: let's just be honest about it. There will always be those who prefer passive spectatorship over mutual participation. But let's also be honest that whatever it is we want to label gatherings of that nature, they're not even remotely similar to the gatherings of the early church. And too much passive spectatorship leads to spiritual atrophy and, ultimately, death, both individually and collectively.

1. If you have not yet joined a HeartGroup, I want to strongly encourage you to do so. If

there isn't one in your area, then start one. The groups are simply environments where we learn how to practice the "one-anothers" of the New Testament. It doesn't have to replace your present worship service. Pick a night of the week where you and some fellow Jesus followers can meet together to mutually share what Jesus is teaching each of you. Make some time to encourage each other, to bear each other's burdens, to pray with and for one-another, and to spur each other on toward love. If you'd like more information on how you can start a HeartGroup or how you might find one in your area, go to: www.rhmheartgroups.com

2. This week I want you to pick something from the life of Jesus: either a story, a parable, or a teaching (like those found in the Sermon on the Mount). I want you to prayerfully contemplate whatever you choose each day, writing down what Jesus shares with you from other parts of the scriptures, from life experiences, from your prayer time—anything in which Jesus is helping you directly understand what in the Jesus story He wants you to see.

New Book with Herb Montgomery as one of the many contributing authors.

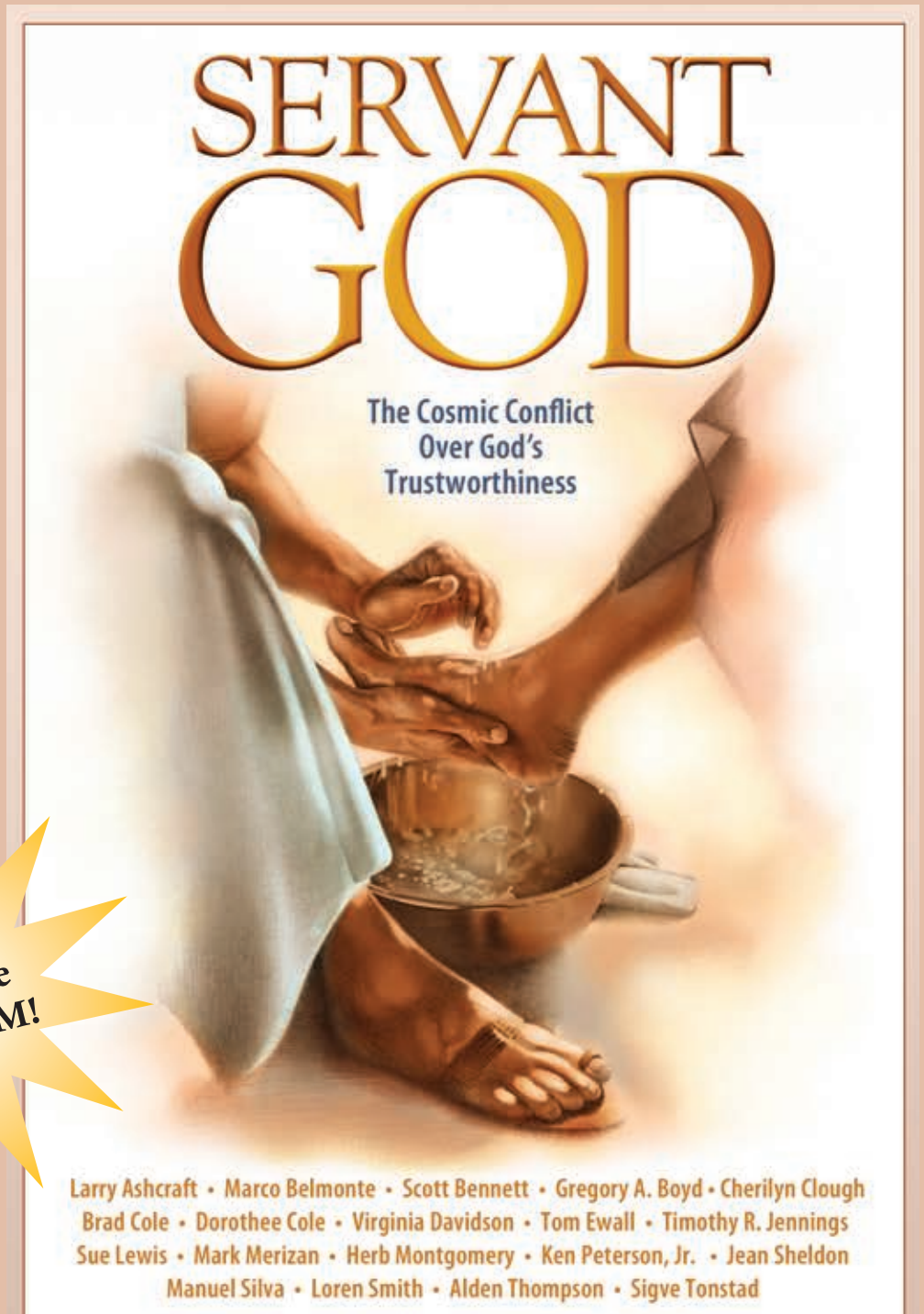
Jesus came to show us what God is like. He said, *“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father”* (John 14:9). He associated with sinners and outcasts, exhibiting God’s methods: saving, healing—he didn’t come to condemn. When he washed the disciples’ feet, he modeled true greatness. In his mock trials and on the Cross, he refused to use force against his enemies, forgiving instead—even dying for them. Jesus’ life and death were a revelation of who God is.

Yet too often, Christ’s mission is reduced to that of “whipping boy” for sins—the recipient of divine wrath. This picture of an angry, abusive God has created angry, abusive “Christians”—we become like the one we worship, true or false—and atrocities have been committed in God’s name throughout the centuries, rooted in wrong conceptions of him.

It’s time to change our ideas about God. Two thousand years ago, Jesus showed us that God’s infinite power is matched by his humility; that the success of his Kingdom is defined not by conquering our enemies through force or fear, in the courtroom or on the battlefield, but by our love for them; that the heart of the omnipotent God always serves.

Servant God is written by a wide variety of authors, both theologians and lay people. This blend of writers reflects the composition of God’s kingdom—people from different backgrounds and walks of life joining in a common message, bound together by their love for a Person—God revealed in Jesus.

**Now
Available
from RHM!**



Larry Ashcraft • Marco Belmonte • Scott Bennett • Gregory A. Boyd • Cherilyn Clough
Brad Cole • Dorothee Cole • Virginia Davidson • Tom Ewall • Timothy R. Jennings
Sue Lewis • Mark Merizan • Herb Montgomery • Ken Peterson, Jr. • Jean Sheldon
Manuel Silva • Loren Smith • Alden Thompson • Sigve Tonstad

MINISTRY UPDATE

What If Jesus Could Be You For 24 Hours?

Maybe I've been reading too many books by Dallas Willard lately, I'm not sure. But, the other night I had a very strange dream that Jesus and I made a date to allow him to live my life for one day.

Dallas Willard always expresses discipleship to Jesus as "Living your life as he would live it if he were you." So, maybe I was meditating on this too much the night before. Whatever it was, here's what happened in my dream.

After getting dressed in my clothes, Jesus adjusted my best tie in the bathroom mirror and picked up my briefcase.

"I'll be home in time for dinner," he said. "Enjoy your day off."

"Sure," I said.

Jesus jingled my car keys in his hand as he strolled down the sidewalk and got into my car.

Does he know how to drive a stick? I wondered. But, he started the car and drove it out of the driveway with no problem.

As I stood there in my pajamas looking at the car disappear into the distance, I wondered what he'd do at my work in my place. What sorts of trouble might I be in tomorrow?

When Jesus got home it was late. My car wasn't in the driveway. "I took the bus home," he said.

As he sat down to tell me about his day as me I notice that my wristwatch was missing from his arm. I was afraid to ask him what

had happened to it.

First Jesus explained about why he hadn't brought my car back. "There was this homeless woman at the stoplight near your work," he said. "She has two small children and her husband left her two years ago."

I finally got the nerve to ask him what happened to my car and he responded matter-of-factly, "You didn't give me any money, so I gave her your car. You should have seen the look of joy in her eyes."

I remembered avoiding eye-contact with that woman the last few weeks. I wasn't even interested in rolling down my window to drop a few dollars into the bucket she was holding. Now she was out driving around in my car. What would I tell my insurance agent?

Then Jesus went on to explain how, once he got to my cubicle at work, he began to hammer out those monotonous spreadsheets that were due on Friday instead of checking email and surfing the web for the first 35 minutes of the day. "I got done about ten minutes before the coffee break," he beamed.

At break time, instead of slipping outside to eat a Snickers or smoke a cigarette, Jesus walked down the row to visit Charlie, the quiet guy at work that nobody ever talks to. At first I wasn't sure who Charlie was, but as he began to describe the guy I start to remember him. He was a weird guy I'd never bothered to talk with before.

"I told him not to be discouraged. He's been considering a divorce, but I reminded him of those early days when he and his wife first fell in love. I think he might be willing to try and love her more, in spite of the way she treats him sometimes. We prayed together before I left," he said.

The rest of the day, Jesus tells me, he flew through my workload, returned all my old email messages, and got twice as much accomplished as I ever had.

"I really wanted to do a good job," he explained, "So your boss would know how thankful you are to have a job. I think he was beginning to doubt how dependable and hard-working you were. Character is such as lost art these days," he said. I nodded along as he spoke and tried to sit up straight in my chair.

"On the bus ride home," Jesus said, "I met an old woman whose Grandson had just been diagnosed with HIV. At first she went on about his filthy lifestyle and how he got what he deserved."

Jesus stopped suddenly and I thought he was about to cry. I asked him, "What's wrong?"

"It's a terrible thing," he said.

"What is?"

He looked up at me, with tears in his eyes, and said, "To get what you deserve."

After drying his eyes, Jesus continued with his story. "I reminded her of those early days when her Grandson was a small boy, and then I asked her to share her fondest memories of him as a toddler."

"He's going to die soon," Jesus said. "I wanted her to give him the grace he needs before it's too late."

After a few moments Jesus composed himself and stood to go. I offered him some dinner but he shook his head and said, "No thanks," he said. "I'm fasting."

Before he left, Jesus looked into my eyes with a smile. "You've had quite a day with me in your shoes," he

cont'd on page 8

HeartGroups Testimony

What's A HeartGroup?

Romans 15:14—I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to **instruct one another**.

Colossians 3:16—Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you **teach and admonish one another** with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

Ephesians 4:16—From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, **as each part does its work**.

Hebrews 10:24,25—And let us consider how we may **spur one another on** toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but **encouraging one another**—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Matthew 20:25-26—Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. **Not so with you**. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.”

Matthew 23:8-9—But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and **you are all brothers**. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.

The open, mutually participatory nature of the New Testament Church was conceived in the Godhead itself and given birth on the day of Pentecost. In the early church there were no Clergy. There were no Laity. There were GIFTS. And each of those gifts were exercised by each person present. What we see in the early church is a priesthood of all believers, mutually living the 52 one-anothers of the New Testament together in community, just like the Godhead.

Does this resonate with you?

For more on this please check out the articles on our HeartGroups page at www.rhmheartgroups.com

Schedule

JANUARY 17-26, 2014

Cornerstone Adventist
Community Church
Coquitlam, BC CANADA
604.723.3433

JANUARY 31 - FEBRUARY 2, 2014

Southpoint Adventist Church
Jacksonville, FL
904.448.4030

FEBRUARY 7-8, 2014

Eastgate Adventist Church
Walla Walla, WA
509.529.9933

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2014

Battleford Adventist Church
Battleford, Saskewatchen,
CANADA
306.445.9096

MARCH 7-16, 2014

Pullman Adventist Church
Pullman, WA
509.332.8782

Egalitarian World... cont'd from page 4

3. I want you to share with your HeartGroup this upcoming week what you discover.

Think of it like a Fellowship Dinner. If the same person did all the cooking each week, they'd get pretty burnt out, and you'd miss out on all the other fine foods of the other cooks that you could be experiencing as well. (Not to mention how some would even be learning how to cook if that were the case.) But when each person brings something small, they each get to enjoy that which is prepared, brought, and lovingly shared with each other. What the early church did was practice this feeding of “one-another” spiritually, as well.

“If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17) Let's go put on display what the “one-anothers” of the Reign of Christ look like!

Keep living in love, loving like Christ, till a world where love reigns is the only world that remains. Let's go enlarge the Kingdom!

I love you guys. Oh, and Happy New Year! ■



Testimonies

I just want to say thank you for the book Finding the Father. My husband and I have felt like rebels sometimes for believing that God doesn't use suffering to His ends - He cries "An enemy hath done this!" I feel the pop religion that says God manipulates pain for our good is a heresy. My husband spoke recently and gave a seminar based on your book. We believe that a true picture of God is so important. I have also bought

copies of Finding the Father for 3 friends. We wish you all the best in your ministry. My husband mentions your book wherever he speaks!- *SL*

I am listening to Christus victor. When I hear you share things with a depth of understanding that I may never possess my heart shifts even closer to my God. The teachings seem to be so simple, so common sense based that I wonder at why it is so hard for so many to grasp. What you teach is truly revolutionary to the people

of this time. I know without a doubt that you and your family must be a huge target for not only Satan but for those who have allot riding on keeping their followers in bondage. You and your family are always in my prayers. Keep up the amazing work, the things you share are life changing and you paint the most amazing picture of God. I am far from perfect but I hope that I can help change the way people see God. Thank you for all that you do and thank your family for sharing you with the world!- *AH*

Ministry Update cont'd from page 6

said. "We should do this again sometime."

Then Jesus handed me a small box. "I made this gift for you," he said

When he left, I opened it. It was a small bracelet that said, "What Will You Do?"

Then I woke up.

by Keith Giles

(Keith is from Orange County, CA and is a teacher, author, copywriter, activist, servant of Jesus, and dear friend of Herb and RHM. For more from Keith check out his blog at subversive1.blogspot.com)

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

*All donations receive a tax-deductible receipt.

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

Featured Presentation



The Favor of God by Herb Montgomery.

Forgiving one's enemies as well as encountering God's forgiveness for oneself is, for many, one of the most life transforming, healing and yet most challenging elements of following Jesus and enlarging His Kingdom here on earth. If you would like to experience God's forgiveness for yourself

more deeply, as well as learning how to more readily become a conduit of forgiveness for those around you, we want to offer you this month's featured presentation entitled *The Favor of God*. All of us love poorly, life is an adventure in learning how to forgive.