



Awakenings

"Only by love is love awakened."

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries :::::: Volume 9 :::::: Issue 1 ::::::



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Herb Montgomery



HeartGroups:

Experiencing
New Testament
ekklesia through open,
mutual participation.

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

*"What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? **When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.**"*

—Paul
(1 Corinthians 14:26)

Do you long for authentic and fulfilling fellowship? Have you ever felt that there's more to be found in the experience of being a follower of Jesus, but you can't quite put your finger on what's missing? Would you like to discover a community in which you are able to grow as a follower of Jesus by listening to others as well as having the opportunity to share with others?

It's not by coincidence that there are actually 52 "one anothers" in the New Testament.

We'd like to begin this 2015 with an entire Newsletter dedicated to what we at Renewed Heart Ministries refer to as HeartGroups. We believe that it by listening to the many voice, perspectives and stories of each other that we begin to experience Jesus' new world.

HeartGroups are in essence, a gather of Jesus-followers who practice open meetings.

What's an open meeting? We are going to turn first to the voice of a dear friend of mine, Keith Giles, as he introduces us to what an open meeting is in what is the first installment of a five part series Keith has put together.

The Anatomy of an Open Meeting

by Keith Giles

Part 1: WHAT IS AN OPEN MEETING?

An open meeting is one where everyone in the gathering is as free as anyone else to speak, or to share, or to teach, or to sing, etc., as the Holy Spirit leads them.

This sort of meeting is what Paul was describing in 1 Corinthians 12 where he begins by explaining how various spiritual gifts are distributed throughout the church and then uses a Body metaphor to describe how these gifts are designed to function in a practical way.

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the

same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work." (1 Cor. 12:4-6; emphasis mine).

Right off the bat, Paul explains that there are different kinds of gifts, and also that the purpose of them is to work "in all of them" (the members of the church) and he emphasizes that "everyone" is expected to participate. Not only a select few. As he goes on to say in the next verse:

"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." (1 Cor. 12:7)

Here, he re-emphasizes that "each one" is given the spiritual gift "for the common good" of everyone else in the church gathering.

This tells us that the spiritual gifts are not to edify or build up the person using the gift, but to lovingly bless and minister to everyone else in the church fellowship. Therefore, the spiritual gifts are "in all of them" and "everyone" is gifted to be a blessing "for the common good" of their brothers and sisters.

Notice that Paul doesn't say that the manifestations of the Spirit are given for a select few, or to one man, but to "everyone" and that "each one" receives a different gift in order to be a gift to everyone else. This is the groundwork for an open meeting of Christians.

After listing a series of spiritual gifts that might be given to the members ("Message of wisdom", "faith", "gifts of healing", etc.), Paul again says:

"All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines." (1 Cor. 12:11)

Just in case we've forgotten, Paul reminds us that "each one" receives a gift from God in the church in order to facilitate the work of the Spirit in the church when they gather.

Next, Paul goes on to explain that the Body (which is a metaphor for how the Church should function), is one, even though it is made up of many parts. He then takes time to illustrate how the church is designed on purpose to be a group of very different sorts of people. Not a homogenous cookie-

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...Open Group cont'd from page 2

cutter group of clones, but a gathering of people who are not like one another. He talks about how those who are “feet” cannot say they are not part of this body because they are not like the “hands”, and he goes on to stress that the “eyes” cannot kick out the “hands” because they are different. Therefore, differences are to be expected – even celebrated – and this is because the variety is part of what makes us a body of many parts. He closes the chapter by saying:

“But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (1 Cor. 12:24-27)

This is really only the ground work for what an open meeting of believers should

look like. Paul explains how the gifts of the Spirit are distributed to everyone in the Church using the metaphor of a Body that is made up of different parts that serve different functions, and he makes the point that these parts are all essential for the life of the Body.

This means that if you are a follower of Christ, you have a spiritual gift from God. It means you have a very crucial role to play in the growth and development of the Church family where you are a member. It means that you matter. You are important. We need you, and you need all of us.

What I find fascinating is that Paul follows this chapter about how a gathering of believers can operate like a Body with an entire chapter on love. He does this twice more in Ephesians 4 and in Romans 12. Every time Paul talks about spiritual gifts in the Body, the very next thing he talks about is love. Why? Because the gifts are given in love, and they only work if we use them out of love to bless the brothers and sisters we love in order to help them to

grow into the image of Christ who is love.

Later, in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul returns to this idea of how everyone in the Body is expected to operate together for the common good, saying:

“What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.” (1 Cor. 14:26)

Again, Paul returns to the theme he laid out in chapter 12. The command is, “When you come together, each of you” uses their God-given gifts for the common good. Why? Because, as Paul goes on to say, this kind of symbiotic sharing of love and ministry is essential and “must be done so that the church may be built up.”

This isn't an optional method for gathering that Paul outlines for us here. Paul is emphatic that “each one” of us should use

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Mutual, Open Sharing Versus Passive Spectatorship

by Herb Montgomery

The early New Testament gatherings were marked by mutual listening, mutual sharing, mutual love, mutual fellowship, mutual dependence, mutual honor, mutual submission, mutual dwelling, and authentic community.

This actually explains that the role of a New Testament Apostle is so unique from anything we have today. (Apostles were church planters, but in a very unique fashion; see Ephesians 4:12-13). After the Gospel (The Jesus Story) had been shared and there were present those who desired to follow the teachings of this Jesus, the Apostle would stay in the area for a temporary time, with one goal in mind: Establish and develop a group with an open, mutually participatory nature, and once it's off and running, leave it! These fellowships were not to be led by the Apostle. They were to function with mutual participation in mutual



submission growing up into the Christ (Ephesians 2:14, 15).

With the help and encouraging of the Apostle, those within the group who had a natural tendency to take over would have to learn, over time, to listen more to others in the group and to submit more to the headship of Christ Himself in each gathering (Ephesians 4:15-16). Those who were not comfortable sharing needed time, encouragement, and support from the group, as they became more comfortable, and over time, confident, in sharing and edifying the group with the ways in which Jesus was leading them as well. From a human view point, the work of the Apostle was about teaching those who like to share to also listen more, and for those who are not comfortable sharing

to become more comfortable. From a Divine viewpoint, it was about teaching a group to, together, submit to one another as they all sought together to follow this Jesus into the new world he had founded.

The early church, as best we can tell from the New Testament, was characterized by:

- face-to-face community
- the functioning of every member
- open-participation meetings (as opposed to preacher-to-spectator services)
- non-hierarchical leadership
- the centrality of Jesus Christ, Jesus' teachings, and the hope of the new world to be discovered through following this Jesus.

It's a new paradigm for some to think about, for sure. But you don't have to think too hard. Try starting a HeartGroup in your area and see where Jesus leads it. You don't have to be in charge; he'll take care of that. You simply provide the location. The group itself, through being connected to Jesus as well as one another, provides the food, the fellowship, and the mutual sharing, teaching and encouragement.

The Wisdom of Difference among the Disciples of Christ

by Keisha E. McKenzie

"An open meeting is one where everyone in "And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: And Simon he surnamed Peter; And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread... There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother." —Mark 3:14-20, 31-35

All three of the synoptic gospels, Mark, Matthew, and Luke, contain a few, well-placed lists that it's tempting to skip past.

In Mark 3, Jesus is introducing himself to Judaea's demon-possessed and scribes. The multitude presses in to see him, and his relatives demand he come out to meet them. That's when Mark throws up a "Take Five" sign and lists some of his disciples, including some characters he has already described. Matthew and Luke also list Jesus's ancestors: Matthew follows the line from Abraham and David by way of Ruth and Bathsheba to Joseph, while Luke tracks backward all the way to "Adam, [who] was of God."

The gospel writers often discuss the disciples as a bloc: they are the group that doesn't grasp Jesus' stories, or that cannot correctly identify his role in history, or that falls into a post-dinner nap during his final prayer meeting. We don't have many details about the disciples' private

meetings, though. If we did, we might know more about how Jesus the Master Teacher managed his diverse inner circle—not just the named twelve and Lazarus whom he loved, but also the women who funded and fed the group as it journeyed around the region—Mary the Magdalene, Susanna, Joanna, Mary, and Martha.¹

Had the gospel writers thought to make this part of the early believers' story explicit, we'd now have the scoop on how Jesus navigated the disciples' latent power dynamics: just how did he inspire a large group of strong-opinioned people to get along and learn together without once resorting to homicide?



"There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, 'Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.' And he answered them, saying, 'Who is my mother, or my brethren?' And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, 'Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.'"

From the very start, Jesus took his group of friends, and before he instructed them as delegates of his kingdom, he called them his family: Jesus made siblings out of Joanna, Levi, Simon, and Judas Iscariot. Whereas we often say, "Blood is thicker than water," Jesus lived the saying, "God that made the world and all things therein... hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."² From the perspective of the Creator, even as our times and locations

vary, we share the same root. It's our root, our "one blood," that determines our value.

And yet we're so very different too.

A civil servant's wife, a tax collector, a Zealot, and an assassin start the Reign of God on Earth.

And yet we're so very different too.

According to Josephus, Zealots were a group of Jews who were aligned with the Pharisees, resented Roman occupation, valued the observance of Moses' law, resisted Caesar's deification, and felt called to get the Romans out of the Promised Land by any means necessary. The Sicarii, anti-imperialists even more violent than the

Zealots, murdered both Romans and Jews to protest occupation and warn would-be collaborators to support the resistance. Several sources link Judas to this group: either he was a member himself or his father was, and we now know him by the Sicarii's name as well as by his own.

The very same "family" that contained Simon and Judas also contained a tax collector and the spouse of the man who ran King Herod's household. At that time, tax collectors like Levi (Matthew) were considered national traitors. Their job was to ensure that the occupied people paid their dues to Caesar, Herod, and the empire's men in the Temple, and many of them combined greed with power in ways that guaranteed hate and distrust. Similarly, there's no one more complicit with corrupt colonialism than those who tend house for the colonial governor. Running the governor's home was the family business that brought Joanna her wealth.

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The Wisdom of... cont'd from page 4

If we ever need motivation to get over our ethnic, political, theological, gender-related, or sexuality-based biases, power imbalances, and wholly unnecessary conflicts, we should be able to find it in Jesus's example of heterogeneity here.

Someone who knows everything doesn't need more perspectives or more humility. But Jesus modeled the practice of both.

The praise hymn in Philippians 2 tells us that God emptied Godself, and in humility took on the embodied, particular, time-bound, enculturated experience of being a young, male, Jewish human who grew, taught, healed, and died under the gaze of a repressive, imperial, pre-industrial military force.³

Then, as today, being fully embodied means being located in time and space and being unable to wholly escape either of them. It means being gendered, sexed, and rooted in one's socio-cultural contexts—ethnicities, class, religion, sect, and language groups. Incarnation literally limits one's perspective.

The best way for me to illustrate this limiting is to recommend browsing the Scale of the Universe visualization site. As you click through the Scale, imagine nearly the entire visible universe being pushed into the indistinct distance: only patches of your surroundings remain perceptible to you. We can directly perceive 2-12 miles around us depending on the weather and an unobstructed view, and we can't see anything smaller than a human egg without help from technology. Not much is closer to our eyes than the mirrors we use to look at ourselves, and yet we still "see through a glass darkly."

In and through this embodied life, then, we don't perceive much on our own. Fortunately, we don't have to try.

The single best way to counter the limits of private perspective is to initiate and maintain active, learning relationships with a heterogeneous group of peers. That is what the disciples were to the incarnate Lord. It's also what we can be for each other.

Our groups, our churches, our friendships, and relationships are all opportunities for us to practice perceiving the world with one another. We practice giving and receiving and building on a multiplicity of perceptions and experiences as we sit

around the common table that our Master Teacher has called each of us to join.

We share our perceptions and experiences—the world as we can best sense it from wherever in life we stand—not so that we can draw over the rainbows of creation with one, two, or three approved colors and blot out the rest. We share with each other, muddling through incomprehension and misunderstanding, so that out of the diversity of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, the fullest and complex image of God can finally be seen through all of us, God's very own. "We, too, are His offspring."

Libraries could be written about the challenges and pitfalls involved in being part of a heterogeneous group. But perhaps for now it's enough to recognize that Christ seeded heterogeneous community in this world during his lifetime, and it wasn't an idealistic error; it was an act of wisdom.

1. How much of your holiday time did you spend with people from your family of origin or chosen families? Which views of the world do you share with those people?
2. How much of your holiday time did you spend in heterogeneous spaces? What kinds of differences became obvious to you as you observed and talked with others?
3. Think of the most challenging difference you've encountered in the last month. What, if anything, does that Other teach you about the universe you share? What, if anything, might you have taught that other person through your life or views?

¹ Luke 8:1-3 "And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." "Substance" here means possessions or wealth.

² Acts 17: 24-28 Paul uses Greek poetry and philosophy to introduce the Athenians to God and Christ.

³ Philippians 2:5-11: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Quotable Quotes

"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"

—Jesus
(Matthew 20:25-26,
emphasis added.)

For More Information About HeartGroups

If you would like to try a HeartGroup, or if you are already gathering in early New Testament style, please drop us a line (info@renewedhearministries.com). We'd love to spend some time either encouraging you, helping you start a HeartGroup in your area, and/or just listening to how God is blessing your already existing group. Remember, these are groups where we learn to practice the "One Anothers" of the New Testament. The every-member-lovingly-sharing, mutually participatory nature of Jesus' new world! No two HeartGroups will look the same. These are not glorified Bible Studies where the same person leads out each week. Nor are these just "church" on a smaller scale. Think of it like a church "Potluck" where everyone brings a little something to share and everyone comes prepared as well to listen.

HeartGroups Testimony

The Influence of King James still felt today:

If bishops were put out of power, "I know what would become of my supremacy," James objected. "No bishop, no King." (Willson, p. 198; p. 207.)

In 1611, with the publication of King James Version of the Bible, ordered by King James VI of Scotland, we see a pattern wrongly set of Biblically sanctioning hierarchical authority within the body of Christ and Jesus' New World. It must be remembered that this was a time when the church rigidly espoused a union with Empire, and sought to pattern the structure of the church after the hierarchical leadership patterns of the kingdoms of this world (which was strictly forbidden by Christ in Luke 22:25-27). During this time the King James acted in the capacity of the head of the state church of England. In the publication of the version of the scriptures that bear his name, James ordered fifty-four scholars to issue a translation,

which did not depart from "traditional terminology" throughout the project. For this reason, the KJV naturally reflects the Empire's hierarchical/institutional presuppositions. Words like ekklesia, episkopos, diakonos, praxis and proistemi, today, are contested by scholars as not accurately being translated from the Greek, but rather in a way that would be in keeping with the structure of Empire. Ekklesia was translated into "church;" episkopos was translated into "bishop;" diakonos was translated into "minister;" praxis was translated into "office;" proistemi was translated into "rule;" etc. The Authorized KJV underwent four revisions up until 1769 without this bias ever being corrected. Today modern translations are endeavoring to correct this endorsement of the hierarchical structures Empire with the body of Christ by accurately translating words like ekklesia as "assembly;" episkopos as "overseer;" diakonos as "servant;" praxis as "function;" and proistemi has been translated as "guard."

If you'd like to learn more, you can by checking out this link on our HeartGroups page:

<http://www.renewedheartministries.com/sermons/jesusdialogue/outlines/16hierarchy.pdf>

Schedule

JANUARY 18 - 20, 2015

Building Safe Places Retreat
Nags Head, North Carolina
413.325.3648

JANUARY 23 - 25, 2015

Edmond Adventist Church
Edmond, OK
405.478.4401

MARCH 6 - 8, 2015

Waterloo Adventist Church
Waterloo, IA
319.233.2926

MARCH 27 - APRIL 5, 2015

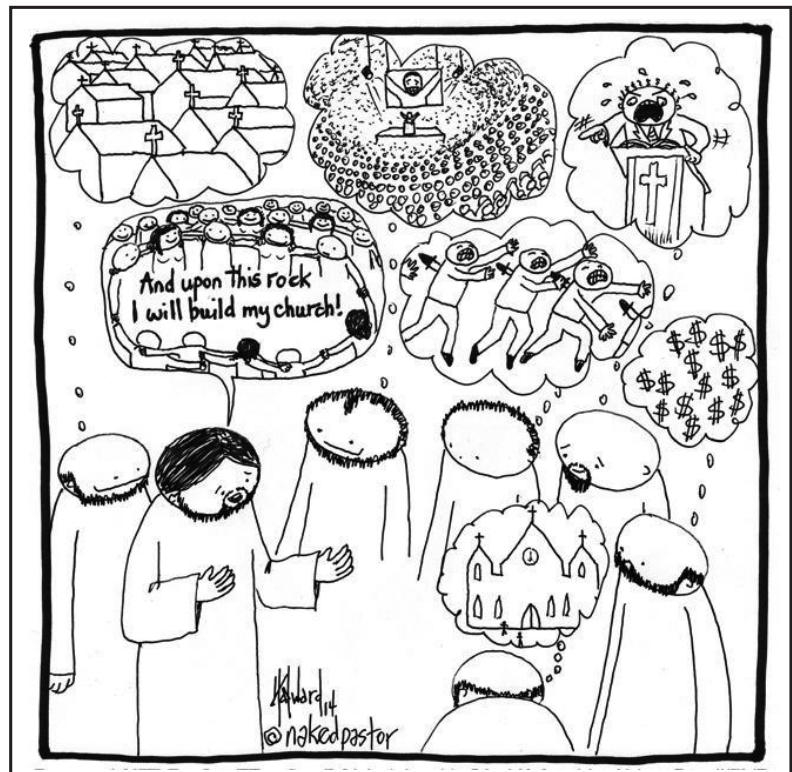
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Edmond, OK
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...Open Group cont'd from page 3

our gifts "for the common good" and that it "must be done" for the "church" to be "built up".

You can quickly see how a Pastor-centric church will never operate in this way as Paul describes. Because with a professional expert in the room, everyone will always turn to that person and wait for instructions. But, Paul doesn't make any room for this aberration. Nor does anyone else in the New Testament scriptures.

An open meeting embraces Paul's instructions here and in other passages to operate as a true body where Christ is the head (Eph. 4:15) – the only head – and we all "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Eph. 5:21) ■



MINISTRY UPDATE

The Clergy and the Laity

The hierarchical clergy/laity divide is a tragic distinction that runs throughout the history of Christendom beginning in the third century. Despite the fact that multitudes dogmatically defend it, this division is without a single New Testament warrant. The word “laity” is derived from the Greek word *laos*. It simply means “the people.” *Laos* includes all Christians—including apostles, prophets, evangelists, elders and teachers. The word appears three times in 1 Peter 2:9–10, where Peter refers to “the people [*laos*] of God.”

1 Peter 2:9–10—But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession [laos], that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people [laos], but now you are the people [laos] of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Never in the New Testament does it refer to only a portion of the assembly. It didn’t take on this meaning, again, until the third century.

The term “clergy” finds its roots in the Greek word *kleros*. It means “a lot or an inheritance.” The word is used in 1 Peter 5:3, where Peter instructs the elders against being “lords over God’s heritage [*kleros*]” (KJV). Here Peter clearly applies *kleros*, not to some

hierarchical church leadership, but to the entire body of Christ, including each and every member.

1 Peter 5:2–3—Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your CARE [not authority], watching over them— not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; NOT LORDING IT OVER God’s heritage [kleros], but being examples to the flock.

The word *kleros* is never used to refer to a hierarchical position within the body of Christ. Like *laos*, it refers to God’s people—for they are His heritage. According to the New Testament, then, all Christians are “clergy” (*kleros*) and all are “laity” (*laos*). We are the Lord’s heritage and the Lord’s people. To frame it another way, the New Testament doesn’t dispose of clergy. It makes all believers clergy. Therefore, the clergy/laity distinction is a post-New-Testament construct that is devoid of any warrant either in the

writings of the Apostles, Acts, or the four versions we have today of the Jesus story itself. It’s also a bothersome menace to what God has called the church to be—the embodiment of the new world that has been founded by Jesus Christ. There is not the slightest hint of the clergy/laity or minister/layman distinction whatsoever in the entire history, teaching, or vocabulary of the New Testament. This distinction is a religious construct that stems from the postapostolic separation of secular and spiritual, heaven and earth, tracing its earliest root causes back to the first Christian heresy of Gnosticism.

Testimonies

“What does Renewed Heart Ministries mean to me? Total paradigm shift!” –JV

“The work of Renewed Heart Ministries and Herb Montgomery have taught me what it truly means to be a follower of Christ. More than just a ticket to heaven, being a Christian is about Jesus’ call to be radically different than the status quo of the world. It means first understanding who God is as reflected in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Based on that revelation of God in Christ, it is a call to imitate Christ in the way we relate to our fellow human beings. It is a way to redeem the world and not just ourselves.” –JS

“I wanted to slip you this little note to thank you for coming to my school and sharing with us about God. I’m one of those students you were talking about. Your talks this week have really helped me. They have given me hope. You’ve given me a new way to see God, to understand myself, and to treat others, especially the way I’d like to be treated. I have you and Jesus to thank for this week. Thank you.” –DD

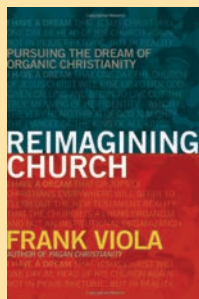
“Thank you RHM, for your message and your heart. God has and is working beautifully through you. RHM is such a blessing.” –LL



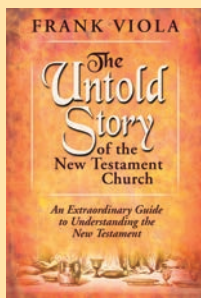
resources & recommendations



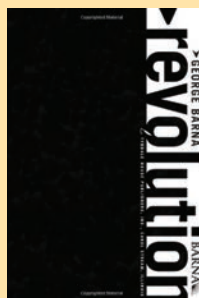
Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices
by Frank Viola & George Barna



Reimagining Church: Pursuing The Dream of Organic Christianity
by Frank Viola



The Untold Story of the New Testament Church
by Frank Viola



The Revolution
by George Barna



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
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Lewisburg, WV 24901**

Contributions can also be made online at:
www.renewedheartministries.com

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

Featured Presentation

It is not by coincidence that there are 52 plus "one-anothers" within the New Testament letters. The communities of first century Jesus followers were characterized by mutual submission, mutual sharing, mutual love, mutual fellowship, mutual dependence, mutual honor, mutual listening, mutual learning, and mutual dwelling. Open, mutually participatory, many voices worship gatherings are nothing new. They have a long history all the way back to Jesus and the apostles. If you would like to rediscover what these early gatherings



looked like as well as gain ideas on how we might recapture that today, we'd like to offer you this month's featured presentation—**A Jesus-Like Church** by Herb Montgomery. You can either request this presentation by free CD or you can download it, along with the handout, freely at renewedheartministries.com/presentation/A-Jesus-Like-Church