



# Awakenings

*"Only by love is love awakened."*

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



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## No Such Thing As Dogs and Pigs... Only Children.

*How "Listening" is the Cure for our Blind Spots*

by Herb Montgomery

## Quotable Quotes

*"[Christianity] is not a matter of getting individuals to heaven, but of transforming the life on earth into the harmony of heaven."*

– Walter Rauschenbusch

**“Lord,” she replied, ‘even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.’” (Mark 7:28)**

This week, I want to place some puzzle pieces on the table for you that may not seem to fit together at first. Once we get them all on the table, though, I hope that we’ll see something fresh and relevant in Jesus’ interaction with the Syrophoenician woman in Mark 7:24-30. Let’s begin by defining three terms.

The first term is *intersectionality*. Intersectionality is the study of intersections between forms or systems of oppression, domination, and discrimination. It describes oppression as an interlocking matrix. The model, first developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, helps us to examine how biological, social, and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, species and other axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels and so contribute to systematic injustice and social inequality.

The second term is *kyriarchy*. Kyriarchy is a social system or set of connecting social systems built around domination, oppression, and submission. Kyriarchy encompasses sexism, racism, homophobia, economic injustice, colonialism, ethnocentrism, militarism, and other dominating hierarchies that encourage people to internalize and institutionalize the subordination of one person or group to another.

The third term is *colonialism*, the establishment, exploitation, acquisition, maintenance, and expansion of colonies in one territory by a political power from another territory. Colonialism depends on a set of unequal relationships between the colonial power and the colony and between colonists and the territory’s indigenous population.

Let’s use intersectionality, kyriarchy, and colonialism to look at the relationship between Rome and Jerusalem during the life of the itinerant preacher Jesus of Nazareth. Ponder the status of Jerusalem in the world during that time. Consider the Hebrew people and their own history. Jesus emerged from a people who had participated in forms of kyriarchy and colonialism but, under Rome, was now disinherited.

Jesus presents some images in his teachings that are directly related to this oppressive context.

## Dogs and Pigs

*“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.” (Matthew 7:6)*

Dogs and pigs are both scavengers, and the Hebrews considered them to be unclean. You may have heard that Jews called any non-Jew “dog.” But this is not correct. According to the *IVP Background Commentary of the New Testament*, Jewish people reserved the slurs of “dogs” and “pigs” only for those gentile foreigners who oppressed the Jewish people, such as the Romans. Today, some use the term “pig” to refer to police constables who have become oppressive.

Jesus’ teaching in this passage critiques how Rome was being permitted to co-opt the sacred and valuable Jewish Temple for Imperial purposes. That’s the most direct interpretation of the passage. Yet I also believe there is something deeper here as well.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has been speaking of inward realities—objectifying women in one’s heart, hatred toward one’s enemies—and not merely outward ones. So I have a hunch that in this passage, Jesus is speaking about the ways that oppressed and disinherited people can allow the sacred and valuable space within them to be co-opted and used for hatred toward their oppressors. Howard Thurman writes about this in his book *Jesus and the Disinherited*.

## Tyre and Sidon

As well as teaching about dogs and pigs, Jesus also taught about Tyre and Sidon. (See Luke 4:25-26; Luke 10.13-14; Matthew 11.21-22) In our story this week, Jesus had retreated to the region of Tyre and Sidon, ancient Phoenician cities, for a respite. Yet what many miss is that while Jesus is there, he is met by a woman described as *Syro-phenician*. “The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia.” (Mark 7.26) It is the “Syro” part that the gospel authors desire to turn our attention. This woman, being from Syria, was of Seleucid

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decent. (Syria was the short-hand name used by Rome to refer to the Seleucid Empire.) Why does this matter? These were the ancient oppressors of the Jewish people before Rome! Under the influence of Antiochus Epiphanies, the Seleucids had sought to exterminate the Jewish people. And although the Seleucids and the Hebrews now shared the same fate under Rome, there was a time when the Seleucids conquered and occupied the Hebrew nation. Jesus' exchange with this woman, a descendant of those how had sought to wipe out the Hebrew people under Antiochus, takes place in a time when this was not yet distant history for the Jewish people.

### **Syrophoenician Woman**

Before I talk about the Syrophoenician woman, I want to turn to Howard Thurman's insightful comments on Jesus' exchange with her.

*"Opposition to the interpretation which Jesus was giving to the gospel of God had increased, and Jesus and his disciples withdrew from active work into temporary semi-retirement around Tyre and Sidon. The woman broke into his retreat with an urgent request in behalf of her child... 'What mockery is there here? Am I not humiliated enough in being misunderstood by my own kind? And here this woman dares to demand that which, in the very nature of the case, she cannot claim as her due.'" (Thurman, Howard; *Jesus and the Disinherited* [pp. 90-91] Kindle ed.)*

The idea that there was a gate called a "needle" that camels had to get down on their knees to enter and was difficult to enter but not impossible has long been debunked by scholars. That's a made-up story. What Jesus is saying is that it's impossible for the rich to enter Jesus' new alternative society here on earth because fundamental to this new society's core is a sharing of one's superfluous riches with those who have less. At its core, Jesus' new alternate society is a divestment of and a redistribution of the riches of the dominant class with the aim of equality.

The issue here is not that this woman was a Gentile. Though the most prominent Phoenician woman in the Old Testament was Jezebel, Elijah also helped a Phoenician woman (1 Kings 17:17) So her non-Jewishness is not the point. In addition to being Phoenician, the woman

was also of Syrian descent: she was Syrophoenician. As Mark writes, *"The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter."* (Mark 7:26). Syria was the term Rome used to refer to the historical Seleucid Empire.

The issue in this story is that Jesus understood that his announcement of "the favor of God" was to apply to Gentiles too (see Luke 4:25-29; Matthew 8:5-13). But *this* Gentile begging him for a blessing was of Seleucid descent. This would be the equivalent of descendants of a Holocaust survivor being asked to share survivor reparations with a descendent of the Nazis who had fallen on hard times. It would be comparable to a White American asking to receive reparations intended for the Native American community here in the United States. It would be as if, two hundred years from now, a same-sex married couple were asked to help the descendent of a fundamentalist-evangelical business-owner from Indiana.

The encounter between Jesus and this woman is set up to prick our sense of justice. Jesus came to liberate the oppressed. But now one of the oppressors was asking him to liberate her daughter too! Jesus question is valid:

*"Is it right to give the children's (the Hebrew people) bread to the dogs (the Seleucids)?"*

According to the Torah, there were foods that were not to be eaten by the Hebrews but that could be thrown out as dog food (see Exodus 22:31). Jesus is here asking: is it *just* to give that which was intended to

liberate my people to a person belonging to those who violently oppressed us in the past?

There are two ways I have heard this explained. One explanation is that Jesus is merely play-acting to teach the on-looking disciples an important lesson in generosity. The other explanation, which I think is more plausible, is that Jesus is growing in his own understanding and experience of intersectionality.

Yes, this woman belonged to a people who had endeavored to wipe his people off the face of the earth. But she was also a woman. Where is her husband? Why is her husband or father not making this request as the father does in Mark 5:22? In a patriarchal world, what does it mean for this woman to be speaking for herself and her daughter as if she were a single mother?

Whatever her circumstances, Jesus asks, is it right to help her? Is *this* how the liberation and reparations for Israel are to be used: not only to benefit those who have been oppressed but also to benefit the suffering oppressors too?

This is where intersectionality comes in. A person can be both oppressor and oppressed simultaneously. After all, the Hebrews were not innocent. Just as the Seleucids had once sought to exterminate the Hebrews from existence, the Hebrews had once engaged in the genocide and colonization of the Canaanites. The Hebrews participated in the cultural patriarchy that those in Hellenistic Tyre

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# MINISTRY UPDATE

## Jesus' Shared Table

Redeeming Grace Fellowship

Nags Head, NC

April 24-25, 2015

This past weekend I had the pleasure of sharing with a church out of Virginia that was gathering on the beach in Nags Head, NC for their annual retreat.

The topics I chose to speak to them about were Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, and Jesus' non-homogenous, non-exclusive shared table in Luke, and how one is the solution for the societal problems named in the other.

One of the absolute coolest things I have experienced in quite a while was taking part in the discussions orchestrated by a my dear friend who invited me at the end of each of my sharing sessions. Her name is Catherine Taylor. What Catherine introduced me to is a model she has affectionately named *Local Wisdom*.

Any one who knows my burden of creating spaces of open, mutual participation will understand immediately why *Local Wisdom* resonated with me so deeply. After I spent some time sharing, Catherine opened the time up for us to go around the circle and respond. Each person was to simply share any thoughts and/or feelings they experienced in response

to what was presented. Everyone who wanted to share was to be given a turn, and then after each person had shared, they would be given a second chance to share. What I loved about this model is that it was very different from many group discussions I have taken part in. The reason was simple: Catherine did not permit anyone to engage in what she called "cross talk." No one could respond to something someone else said until everyone had been given a chance to share first. What this accomplished was to invest each person's voice and their own story with value. Every person's thoughts and feelings were important expressed in a safe space. To be sure, there were different opinions around the circle, but there was no arguing—just the simple expression of each person's thought. No one was able to monopolize the sharing, and the space created for each person's voice was safe and sacred.

After we had gone around a couple of times in this *Local Wisdom* model, I wrapped things up with a few responses of my own, and some closing thoughts on the topic.

I have to admit. I'm a convert! I will be experimenting with this over the next few months, incorporating a *Local Wisdom* time into each of my presentations. What I witnessed though this experience was truly inspirational.

It went to teach about Jesus' shared table. Instead I had the privilege of witnessing it.

Although the number of those who gathered for this weekend was small, for those who engaged in each discussion, the event was transformative. I can't thank each of you enough for your support of RHM. Without you, we could not share "freely as we have freely received." We are deeply appreciative of your partnership with us in sharing Jesus' teaching with others, till the only world that remains is a world where Love reigns.



## Testimonies

"I'd like to take this opportunity to express again just how much I love and appreciate you, my brother." **-KG**

"From the start we felt your authenticity and were moved by the challenging of old frightening ways of picturing Our Father. We learn so much from you and you have such a unique way of perceiving and understanding the Bible. I must admit the Revelation story still stumps me. We respect your message all the more because you have not had an easy ride through life. You really know loss and being let down and feeling deserted acutely, yet you have been able to see God as love like no other speaker I have ever heard. Thank you, Keep the faith" **-L**

## Quotable Quotes

*"This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*

– Matthew 6:9-10





### ***No Such Thing... cont'd from page 3***

and Sydon lived by as well. And although the Jews in Jesus' time suffered economic poverty under Rome's high taxes, the Hebrew had also oppressed the poor with their own kings (Amos 2:6; 5:7, 11, 24). Yes, this Seleucid woman belonged to a people who had historically oppressed the Hebrews, but that day, she, too, needed liberation. Was there enough mercy in Jesus' merciful theism for her as well?

In this story, the compassion of Jesus wins out. It's worth asking ourselves just how Jesus made even a small space in that room to *listen*.

*"Lord," she replied, 'even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.'"* (Mark 7:28)

There is theoretical knowledge and then there is experiential knowledge. Jesus understood a love of enemies in theory and gained a deeper understanding of it that day through experience.

I'm thankful for a Jesus who took time to listen. I'm also thankful for a woman who didn't give up, but persisted in helping Jesus and his disciples see her need and their blind spots. Had Jesus sent her away, a great injustice would have been committed. But he listened. And he entered into a fuller experience of his own ethic that day instead. Henry David Thoreau wrote, *"Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?"*

I cannot fault Jesus for asking the question he asked. Jesus, after all, emerged from the community of the disinherited poor. Jesus faced the same dilemma we face:

how does one embrace enemy love without betraying one's own people?. How does one stay faithful to both justice for the oppressed and the *transformation* of the oppressors?

Jesus and his disciples, I believe, left the region of Tyre and Sidon that day with a fuller experience of the truth that ***there is really no such thing as "dogs" or "pigs."*** ***There are only "children."*** We are all siblings of the same Divine Parents. We all walk this earth side-by-side, and we all wear on our faces the very image of God.

We need each other. What does it mean for us to trade our dominations systems for Jesus' heterogeneous shared table? How can we learn to listen to those who are not like us? How can we learn to incorporate each person's varied life experience into a beautiful and coherent whole that leads to a safer and more compassionate world for all? How can we allow others to show us where our own blind spots are and also share our stories that can help others see their blind spots?

I'll close this week with Howard Thurman's Three Hounds of Hell that dog the soul of the disinherited—fear, hypocrisy, and hatred. The ethical teachings found in the values of the Jesus story as it has come down to us today, I believe, offer the disinherited in any area of society a way to escape those three hounds nipping at our heels. This week, if nothing more, may we all learn to sit around Jesus shared table and simply listen.

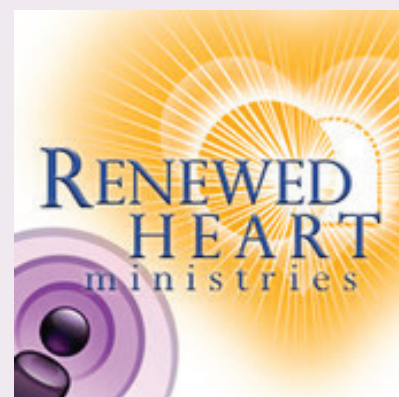
Wherever this finds you, keep living in love, and listening with compassion, till the only world that remains is a world where Love reigns. ■

## **RHM's FREE Podcasts, Via The Internet, Are Going all Around The World!**

We, at RHM, are receiving some profound feedback from all across the globe from those who are listening to our weekly podcasts via the internet. These are proving to be one of RHM's most effective (as well as efficient) means of sharing. Not everyone can attend one our seminars. Herb can only travel to so many churches every year, but the resources (both written and audio) that are right now being taken advantage of by folks, world wide, as well as the feedback we are receiving, is astounding!

Someone wise once said, "Lean into where you see people responding to God's working!" Please consider supporting RHM's weekly podcasts as we, together, continue to share Jesus' teachings in meaningful and effective ways. Till the only world that remains is a world where Love reigns.

Mark your donation "Podcasts."



# HeartGroups:

## Anatomy of an Open Meeting: Part 5 of 5

### Part 5: Other Functions Of A Leader In An Organic Church

by Keith Giles

(For the entire series, please see *Anatomy of an Open Meeting Parts 1-5 at: [www.rhmheartgroups.com](http://www.rhmheartgroups.com)*)

In this, our final installment, we'll talk about a variety of things that leaders (or "elders") in the open meeting or new testament church should be prepared to do, as-needed.

#### Making Disciples

The purpose of the Church is to disciple others to follow Christ and to obey everything that He commands. Obedience to Christ, then, is critical to the life of the Body, and our gatherings together should be one of the primary places we learn how to follow Christ together on a daily basis.

Discipleship, I believe, is not always a leader/student arrangement where the mature Christian is teaching the baby Christian how to follow Christ. Not that it can't be that way, of course, but I don't believe it's the only way we make disciples.

In our house church family I've found that a by-product of our fellowship together is a sort of constant discipleship where the Body works together to help everyone else follow Christ daily. It's an ongoing reality where we are learning together how to follow Christ personally.

#### Dealing with Conflict

As an elder in the Body of Christ, one of our roles is to deal with conflict when it arises. It might be an argument between individuals in the group, or it might be a divisive person who stirs things up, or it might be a disagreement over an issue of doctrine or a point of contention over a practice in the Body.

Our group has had a variety of these issues over the last six years. Sometimes the issues are trivial, and other times they are challenging. As always, spend time on your knees asking the Lord how to proceed.

Remember, Jesus is the one who is



building His church, not you or I.

Always, continually, submit everything to Jesus and allow Him to move and to lead your church family through this process of healing and reconciliation.

#### Discipline

Sometimes, a leader might have to confront a member who needs to be disciplined, and for that I recommend a group of elders within the Body who are motivated by love and full of wisdom and Godly insight. The goal is always reconciliation and restoration. Be as discreet and private as possible as long as the person is cooperative and repentant. Only take things to the entire church body as a very last resort, and then again, only with the desire to bring repentance, reconciliation and restoration.

#### Guarding your Family

Sometimes there are predators who come into your church family and you need to have discernment to recognize them and move quickly to remove them. This might involve meeting with them in person to let them know why you're asking them to leave, or you might need to pull them aside and give them a warning if you think they just need a friendly reminder to change their behaviors.

The kinds of behaviors we need to be wary of are those who cause division or strife in the Body:

*"I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them."* (Romans 16:17)

Also look out for those who seek to have their way or to run the show. If this is

something that you're not called to do, then it's certainly not something that anyone else has the right to do:

*"I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will not welcome us. So when I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, spreading malicious nonsense about us. Not satisfied with that, he even refuses to welcome other believers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church."* (3 John 1:8-10)

Rather than allow one person to have their way and drive others out of the church, you should step in with other elders and ask this person to leave if they cannot fellowship without throwing their weight around.

You, of course, need to watch out for people who claim to be Christians but who are actually not following Jesus at all. As Paul explains:

*"But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people."* (1 Cor. 5:11)

What Paul means, literally, is that we should not allow these people to gather with us when we eat and fellowship as a Church.

As always, the goal is reconciliation and restoration in the Body, not to damage people or to condemn people. So, if you're doing this right, no one else in the Body will ever know that you've met with anyone to discuss anything because you're honoring the people you love, not engaging in gossip or slander.

Again, this is not about control. We don't

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# Schedule

## **JUNE 12 - 28, 2015**

Brazil Meetings  
Novo Airao and Manaus  
Brazil  
503.348.5209

## **JULY 14 - 19, 2015**

Kinship Kampmeeting  
Pamona, CA  
United States  
info@sdakinship.org

## **JULY 20 - AUGUST 3, 2015**

Kapolei Heart Group  
Kapolei, HI  
United States  
808.224.7873

## **AUGUST 28 - 30, 2015**

Adventist Fellowship  
Tulsa, OK  
United States  
918.622.2444



### *HeartGroups... cont'd from page 6*

want our church fellowships to be about making people act like us or think like us. Please don't use this as a license to police the behaviors of your church family.

### **Defend the Liberty of Everyone**

This one, to me, is the most difficult but one of the most important things to remember in an open meeting. In our church family we like to say that "everyone is in process" and this means that we're all coming from different denominational backgrounds and we're all at different levels of maturity in various areas of our walk with Christ.

This means that we do not ever attempt to get everyone else in the Body to agree with us on every point of doctrine. Our group does not have any Statement of Faith for this very reason. Our only criteria for gathering together, and for accepting people into this Body is simply this: "Do you love Jesus? Are you actually seeking to follow Him in your daily life?" And if your answer is "Yes" then you are welcome to be a member of this Body.

All we ask is that you don't attempt to change us to believe what you believe and

we promise not to try to change you to believe what we believe.

This simple attitude of liberty has allowed our group of former Baptists, Pentecostals, Charismatics, Methodists, Presbyterians, etc. to fellowship together for over six years without heated arguments over doctrine. We gather only to seek Jesus together and to help everyone else in the group to follow Him in their daily lives.

Unless you want to create a church that is full of people who act and think and believe just exactly the way you do (and to me that's a nightmare), I encourage you to learn how to disagree agreeably and to major on Christ when you come together, not on this or that little pet doctrine or theory.

You'll not only learn things from people who think different from you, you'll also fulfill Christ's desire that everyone in His Body be one, even as He and the Father are one. Our unity isn't based on agreement on doctrines, but on our sincere love for Christ alone.

Did I miss anything? If you've got any further questions about anything I've talked about in this series, please leave a comment below. I'm open!



# Featured Presentation

Would you like an effective way of sharing Jesus' life, teachings, death and resurrection in a relevant way with those around you? Understanding the worldview of the first century and the meaning of Jesus to those who held that world view helps us understand more clearly how to share Jesus' teachings in a meaningful and coherent way today. World views, within cultures, change over time. Universal truths remain the same.



If you would like to explore how to understand and share Jesus and his teachings in the context of our contemporary context today, we'd love to offer you this month's featured presentation from the new *Narrative Christus Victor* series entitled, —*Christus Victor* — *Part 1* by Herb Montgomery.

Renewed Heart Ministries provides its resources free of charge. Jesus instructed us, "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 Jesus taught 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**

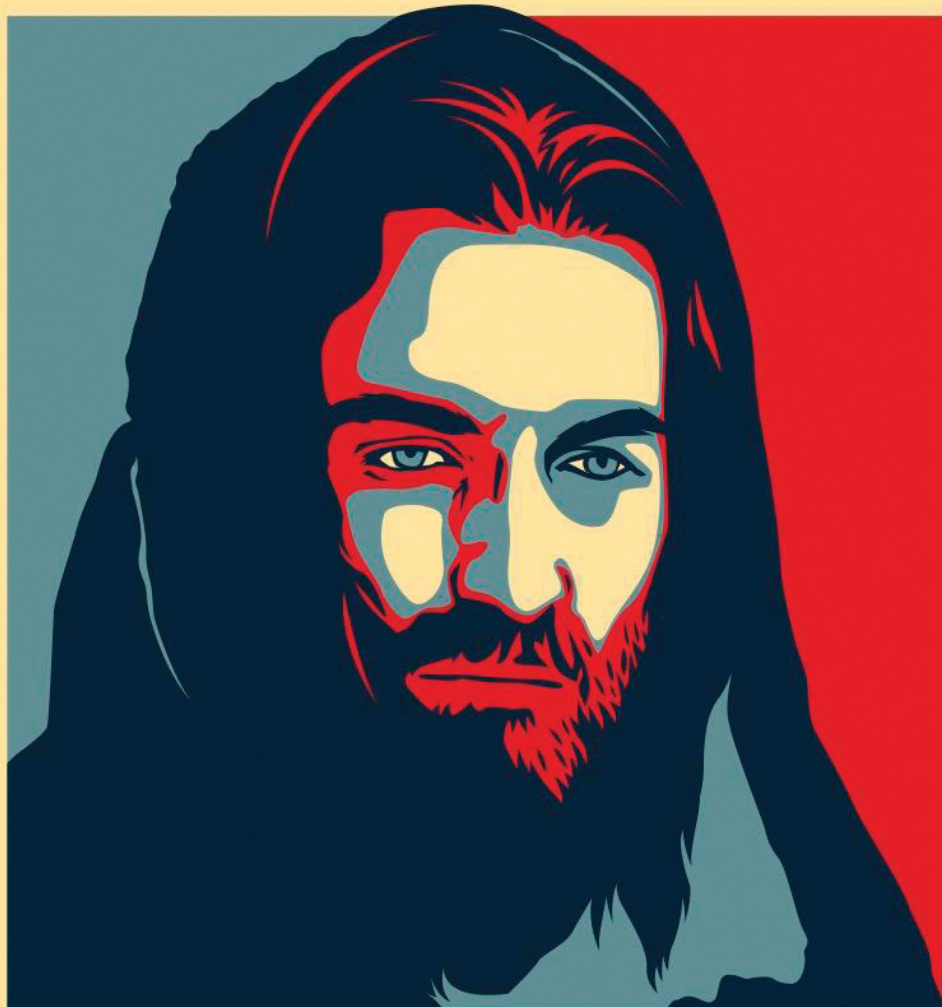
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\*All donations receive a tax-deductible receipt.

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



## Quotable Quotes

*"The basic fact is that Christianity as it was born in the mind of this Jewish teacher and thinker appears as a technique of survival for the oppressed."*

– Howard Thurman;  
*Jesus and the Disinherited*