



Awakenings

"Only by love is love awakened."

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries ::::: March 2016 :::::



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Herb Montgomery

“And the way you want people to treat you, that is how you treat them.” (Q 6:31)

Luke 6:31: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

Matthew 7:12: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

Gospel of Thomas 6:3: “And do not do what you hate.”

This week, our focus in *Sayings Gospel Q* is almost universally referred to as the “the Golden Rule.” The Golden Rule has a broad and lengthy history, beginning, to our best understanding, in 5th Century BCE China.

Karen Armstrong writes in *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions* that “Confucius was the first to promulgate the Golden Rule. For Confucius [the rule] had transcendent value” (p. 248). Armstrong explains, “Confucius saw the ‘ego principle’ as the source of human pettiness and cruelty. If people could lose their selfishness and submit to the altruistic demands of the li [courtly rites similar to medieval European etiquette and courtesy] at every moment of their lives, they would be transformed by the beauty of holiness. They would conform to the archetypal ideal of the junzi, the superior human being.” Unlike isolated monks who seek virtue by separating from all of society including family, Confucius also saw “family” differently:

“Instead of seeing family life as an impediment to enlightenment, like the renouncers of India, Confucius saw it as the theater of the religious quest, because it taught every family member to live for others. This altruism was essential to the self-cultivation of a *junzi*: ‘In order to establish oneself, one should try to establish others,’ Confucius explained. ‘In order to enlarge oneself, one should try to enlarge others’...Confucius saw each person as the center of a constantly growing series of concentric circles, to which he or she must relate...The lessons he had learned by caring for his parents,

spouse, and siblings made his heart larger, so that he felt empathy with more and more people: first with his immediate community, then with the state in which he lived, and finally with the entire world (Armstrong, p. 207).

Mozi, in the fourth century BCE, extended the Golden Rule in China. Isocrates promoted the Golden Rule in Greece in the 3rd Century BCE, and it appeared in India and Persia as well.

These centuries are what Karl Jaspers and Karen Armstrong describe as the Axial Age, the beginning of an awakening among several human cultures when most of them (except for Greece) moved away from the violence and tribalism that had characterized them before. This somewhat simultaneous transition among these cultures is fascinating.

Due to the diaspora and the continual upheaval within Judea during this time (which was not in the least conducive to the quietness that, Armstrong argues, often yields spiritual awakenings, though some would disagree), the Golden Rule does not appear clearly in Judaism until the late first century BCE. The first clear record we have of it in Judaism is the teaching of the Pharisee rabbi Hillel in the 1st Century BCE. Last week we told the story of Hillel summarizing the Torah with the line: “What is hateful to yourself, do not to your fellow man. That is the whole of the Torah and the remainder is but commentary. Go and learn it.”^[1] For Hillel, the Torah was best expressed not in the legal letter, but in the law’s spirit—the Golden Rule.

For the 1st Century Jewish Christians to include the Golden Rule among their record of Jesus’s teachings indicates that this early, original Jesus community believed Jesus’s teachings represented a more compassionate, inclusive interpretation of the Torah. Let’s look at the history around Hillel and that early community.

Hillel, in the later years of his life, served as president of the Jewish Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin handled both the legislative and judicial functions of Jewish government. When Hillel died, Shammai, then vice-president, became president and passed eighteen ordinances that reflected his own

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The Golden Rule

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

“If, for example, every time we were tempted to say something hostile about a colleague, a sibling, or an enemy country, we considered how we would feel if such a remark were made about us—and refrained—we would, in that moment, have gone beyond ourselves. It would be a moment of transcendence.”

– Karen Armstrong,
*The Great Transformation:
The Beginning of Our
Religious Traditions*

The Golden Rule cont'd from page 2

ideas more than Hillel's. The Talmud's redactors describe this act "as grievous to Israel as the day when the calf was made" by Aaron at the base of Mt. Sinai (See *Shabbat*, 17a). Shammai's ordinances, believed to have been intended to build up Jewish identity, included harsh, divisive, antisocial separation between Jews and Gentiles. As such, a folk story developed that mimicked the story of Hillel summarizing the law for a would-be convert. When someone promised to convert to Judaism if Shammai could teach him the entire Torah while standing on one foot, Shammai rebuked him and sent him away, believing this to be impossible. Hillel's grandson Gamaliel became president of the Sanhedrin after Shammai (30 CE), but those who subscribed to Shammai's interpretation of Torah remained the dominant Sanhedrin party until about 70 CE. Today, Rabbinical Judaism follows Hillel's interpretations, believing that a "Voice from Heaven" made the rulings of the house of Shammai null and void.

It is in the context of this conflict between the compassionate school of Hillel and the strict school of Shammai that Jesus's teachings were given.

By including the Golden Rule in the teachings of Jesus, the early Jewish community believed to have been the source of *Sayings Gospel Q* place Jesus alongside Hillel's more inclusive, more compassionate interpretation of the Torah and in contrast to the school of Shammai. There are only two exceptions: the *prozbul* that we talked about last week and divorce.

We discussed last week how Jesus parted ways with Hillel on economics and the *prozbul* that carved out exceptions for lenders against the interests of the poor. And he parted ways with Hillel on the subject of divorce as well. The school of Hillel believed that a man could send his wife away for almost any displeasure. Jesus's teachings on divorce in the gospel of Matthew and Luke are more in harmony with the more stringent school of Shammai who taught that one could only send one's wife away for infidelity.

This is not the case in Mark's gospel, where Jesus' teachings on divorce are even more stringent than Shammai's and give no justification for divorce. However, I would argue that whereas Shammai's teaching on divorce was more stringent, Jesus' teachings were more centered in concerns of *social justice* for subjugated women in a patriarchal society. They increased justice in that society, as did the Deuteronomy instruction about remarriage in its era. (See Deuteronomy 24:1-4)

But please notice the political effect of Jesus's mixed alignment with the schools of his time. The members of the Sanhedrin and Pharisees who subscribed to the school of Shammai, would have seen Jesus as a glutton and a drunkard who violated the standards they believed would strengthen their culture. There would have also been members of the Sanhedrin and

(Matthew 19:1). This is a subtle but important difference. The School of Hillel won out, eventually, over the school of Shammai within Rabbinic Judaism.

Armstrong, in the same book, backs this up. She writes:

"But the most progressive Jews in Palestine were the Pharisees [of the school of Hillel], who developed some of the most inclusive and advanced spiritualities of the Jewish Axial Age. They believed that the whole of Israel was called to be a holy nation of priests and that God could be experienced in the humblest home as well as in the temple. He [sic] was present in the smallest details of daily life, and Jews could approach him [sic] without elaborate ritual. They could atone for their sins by acts of loving-kindness rather than animal sacrifice. Charity

was the most important commandment of the law...The Pharisees [of the school of Hillel] wanted no part in the violence that was erupting destructively around them. At the time of the rebellion against Rome [65-70], their leader was Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, Hillel's greatest student. He realized that the Jews could not possibly defeat the Roman empire, and argued against the war, because the preservation

of religion was more important than national independence. When his advice was rejected, he had himself smuggled out of Jerusalem hidden in a coffin in order to get past the Jewish Zealots who were guarding the city gates. He then made his way to the Roman camp and asked Vespasian for permission to live with his scholars in Javne, on the coast of southern Palestine. After the destruction of the temple, Javne became the new capital of Jewish religion. In Rabbinic Judaism, the Jewish Axial Age came of age. The Golden Rule, compassion, and loving-kindness were central to this new Judaism; by the time the temple had been destroyed, some of the Pharisees already understood that they did not need a temple to worship God, as this Talmudic story makes clear:



Left to right: Confucius, Hillel, Jesus of Nazareth

Pharisees of the school of Hillel who would have loved much of what Jesus taught, yet because of his teachings on the *prozbul* and divorce, would have simply been "on the fence" about him. They would not have been able to *fully* embrace the teachings of Jesus. They would have been able to embrace Jesus on some matters, but not for everything. *With the school of Shammai in the influential majority during Jesus's teaching ministry*, this would've been a dangerous political position. Any allies he would have had on the Sanhedrin would have been in the minority.

I believe the gospels tell a historically incomplete picture of the Pharisees. Certainly Jesus would have run into problems with the Pharisees of the school of Shammai. But I think it's important to note that Matthew uses the phrase "some Pharisees," and not "[all] the Pharisees"

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Encourage One Another

Philadelphia, PA
January 31, 2016

**"Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing."
(1 Thessalonians 5:11)**

Two weeks ago, I had the unique pleasure of being able to participate in the launch of a new, Sunday afternoon fellowship group in the home of a dear friend of mine in Philadelphia. This time of encouragement and inspiration is the brainchild of Leon King. Late one evening, I received a phone call from Leon asking if I would be willing to drive up for the day and help him with the "kickoff" of this new venture. Of course!

It was a fantastic afternoon. I met eight very cool people from all walks of life, with different backgrounds and various faith traditions. What bound each of these eight together was a sincere desire to lean more deeply into the teachings of Jesus and to encourage each other, in community, in following those teachings.

For my portion, I chose to share the parallel portions of the Jesus story as we have it today, as found in Matthew



20:24-28, Mark 10:41-45, and Luke 22:24-30, along with the section in the Gospel of John found in 13:4-5, 12-17. I brought out the words of Jesus in these passages—that among his followers there was to be an absence of hierarchy. Rather than seeking, even in subtle ways, to subordinate one another, we are to take the posture of serving and taking care of each other. Every person's voice is to be heard. Every person's story and experience is of value. Each person matters. (In the very beginning of John's gospel, the affirmation of every person is made. In John 1.9, "the true Light" is spoken about, which, this gospel states, enlightens every person. I encouraged each person in this group to honor each person's encounter with this Light.)

As we learn to listen to each other, we grow together. Values and ways of living are born out of this communal

encounter with the teachings of Jesus. As each person considers the values of the Jesus story, not only through the lens of one's own experience but also through the lens of each person in the room, we are given opportunities to make choices that can lead us further toward Jesus's safer, more compassionate world for us all.

We went around the room and shared a little about ourselves, why we were there and the things we were facing in our lives. We finished with a time of contemplation and prayer.

On the way back, as I was driving in my car, I wished I could witness more ventures like this one. What a beautiful thing for a group of friends to do for each other.

I've watched some of the emails that have been going back and forth between this group's members over the past two weeks. Emails about who is going to bring snacks for the upcoming week, as well as topics some would like to discuss. I've also seen expressed the needs of some within the group and the ways each person can lend a helping hand.

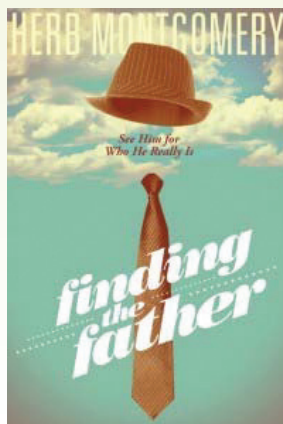
I'm so encouraged by activity like this. This was what Jesus referred to as "the reign of God." It's *people*, taking care of *people*. And I never fail to be awed by its beauty.

Free Audio Book Version of *Finding the Father* Now Online!

Thanks to the wonderful work of Pastor Bill Edwards, we are proud to make available an audio-book-version of *Finding the Father*, for **FREE** streaming or download!!

You can access this audio version at:

<https://renewedheartministries.com/presentation/Finding-the-Father>



Testimonies

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

What a wonderful gift of the picture of God you continue to give us. God bless you as you share God with others too." **-MA**

The Golden Rule cont'd from page 3

It happened that R. Johanan ben Zakkai went out from Jerusalem, and R. Joshua followed him and saw the burnt ruins of the Temple and he said: 'Woe is it that the place, where the sins of Israel find atonement, is laid waste.' Then said R. Johanan, "Grieve not, we have an atonement equal to the Temple, the doing of loving deeds, as it is said, 'I desire love and not sacrifice.'"

Kindness was the key to the future; Jews must turn away from the violence and divisiveness of the war years and create a united community with "one body and one soul." When the community was integrated in love and mutual respect, God was with them, but when they quarreled with one another, he [sic] returned to heaven, where the angels chanted with "one voice and one melody." When two or three Jews sat and studied harmoniously together, the divine presence sat in their midst. Rabbi Akiba, who was killed by the Romans in 132 CE, taught that the commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" was "the great principle of the Torah." To show disrespect to any human being who had been created in God's image was seen by the rabbis as a denial of God himself and tantamount to atheism. Murder was a sacrilege: "Scripture instructs us that whatsoever sheds human blood is regarded as if he had diminished the divine image." God had created only one man at the beginning of time to teach us that destroying only one human life was equivalent to annihilating the entire world, while to save a life redeemed the whole of humanity. To humiliate anybody—even a slave or a non-Jew—was equivalent to murder, a sacrilegious defacing of God's image. To spread a scandalous, lying story about another person was to deny the existence of God. Religion was inseparable from the practice of habitual respect to all other human beings. You could not worship God unless you practiced the Golden Rule and honored your fellow humans, whoever they were."

(Armstrong, Karen; *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions* (Kindle Locations

7507-7540). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.)

What does all of this mean for the Jesus of *Sayings Gospel Q*? It means several things.

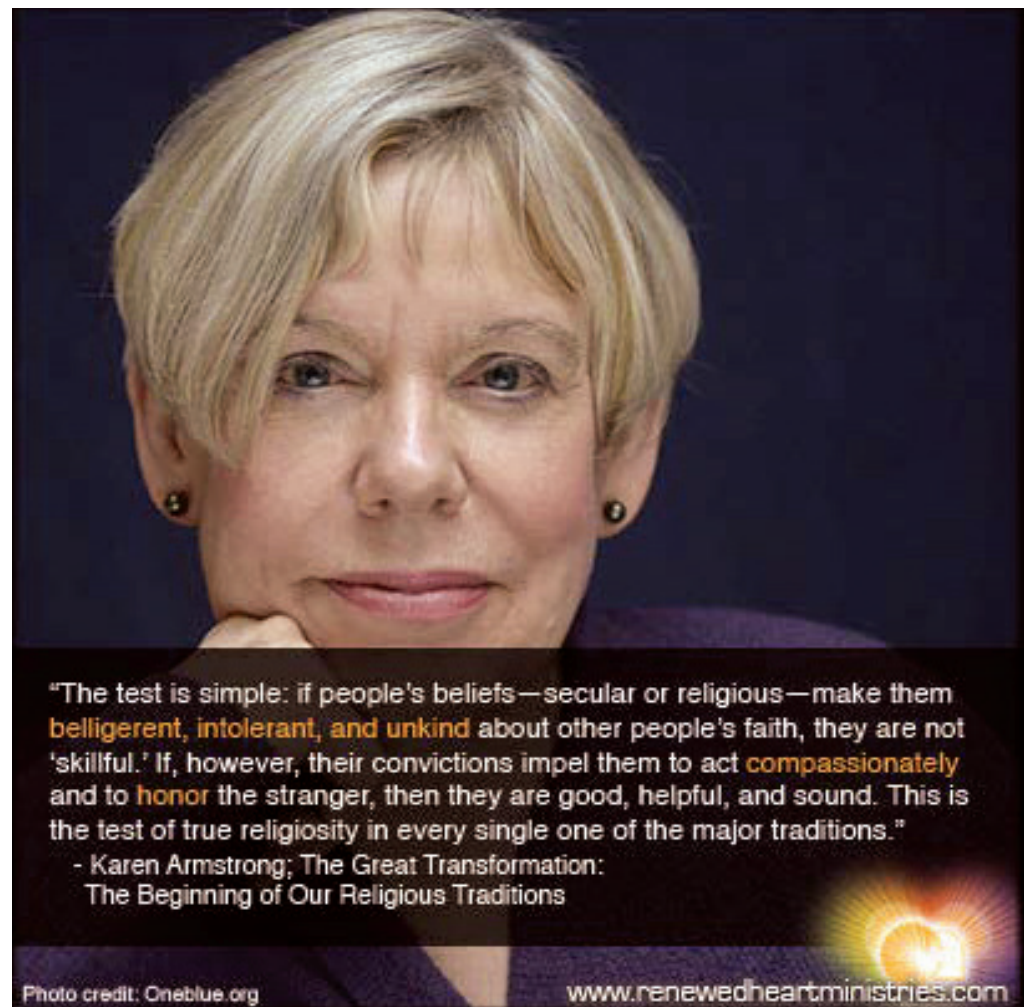
1. It means that the early Jewish followers of Jesus perceived Jesus and his teachings to be a part of this compassionate stream of thought represented by Hillel. That stream eventually won out in Rabbinic Judaism.
2. Jesus's execution was more politico-economic than religious. It was not Jesus's teachings on nonviolence, inclusivity, and the golden rule that got him crucified. The school of Hillel was already teaching these values and Jesus came alongside of that stream and taught them as well. What created the greatest difficulty for Jesus was his solidarity with the poor and his critique of the wealthy elite and their exploitative economic system that centered in Temple and its aristocracy. In our time, it wasn't

Dr. Martin Luther King's teachings on racial integration and inclusion that inspired his assassination. King was assassinated when he began to threaten the military and economic system of America.

3. The anti-Semitism created by Christianity and that produced the Holocaust is based on a deeply flawed interpretation of the history of Jesus and the Jewish people. Jesus was not a Christian. Jesus was a Jew. And to a large degree he was a Jew who subscribed in most things to the school of the greatest Jewish rabbi of all time, Rabbi Hillel.
4. There is much about Rabbinic Judaism that flows from Hillel's teachings and is in perfect harmony with the ethical teachings of Jesus in *Sayings Gospel Q*. And this harmony provides much common ground for a healthy and positive interfaith discussion that needs to continue.

To believe that Jesus taught the Golden

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Enough Room at the Table – FREE!

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“WATCHFREE”

www.EnoughRoomFilm.com

ENOUGH ROOM AT THE TABLE is a dialogue film set at the intersection of faith, gender, and sexuality. It's meant to model the sacred space that opens up when we gather to genuinely listen to each other and participate in each other's lives. Our differences in beliefs, theological paradigms, and practice don't disappear; but we stop seeing each other as position statements or labels and instead see each other as fellow beloved children of God. We start looking like the sort of people who are known by their love.

This film shows a weekend dialogue as 12 Adventists from around the United States gathered to engage and converse about topics often not discussed (or often discussed without key voices at the table). The group includes pastors, educators,

parents, and LGBT+ Adventists, all from differing theological paradigms, experiences, and perspectives.

The participants didn't know each other before this weekend, but they were committed to open, authentic, and respectful dialogue. The deeply honest, sacred, and inspiring dialogue they model is what we're making available now. We hope this dialogue inspires viewers to host your own small group conversations in their own homes, churches, and communities as it's a powerful and transformative process that will create ripples of hope and healing.

Each pay-what-you-want purchase (only a \$.99 minimum) includes the feature-length film ENOUGH ROOM AT THE TABLE plus over 45 minutes of additional special features, and a facilitator's guidebook & resources (PDF) to help host your own small group dialogue.

“The first duty of love is listening.”
 – Paul Tillich

This film is produced and directed by Stephen Eyer and Daneen Akers.

The Golden Rule cont'd from page 5

Rule is to harmonize us with the transition away from violence, tribalism, and oppression toward peace, justice, inclusivity, and egalitarianism within all of the major faith traditions. There are exceptions, but Christianity is still moving toward this transition. Just as Hillel influenced Rabbinic Judaism, it is my prayer that the Jesus revealed in *Sayings Gospel Q* can also influence modern Christianity.

Whether we attribute the Golden Rule to Confucius, Hillel, or the sayings of Jesus, it's a better way than the eye-for-an-eye principle of treating people the way they have treated you. With the Golden Rule, we have the power to not only be the change we want to see but to also set those changes in motion with the principle of reciprocity. For all those who are striving toward a safer, more compassionate world for us all, in the words of the Jesus in *Sayings Gospel Q*:

“The way you want people to treat you, that is how you treat them.” (*Sayings Gospel Q* 6:31)

HeartGroup Application

1. This week, set aside ten minutes every day for quiet contemplation. I want you to contemplate only one thing for these ten minutes—the principle of the Golden Rule. Meditate on the interconnectedness of us all, and what it looks like to live this principle in your daily life.
2. At the end of the ten minutes each day I want you to write down the key insights you gained from the experience.
3. Share what you discovered this week with your HeartGroup for discussion and action.

Thanks, once again, for taking the time to join us in this series. I'm so glad you did.

Till the only world that remains is a world where only love reigns.

I love each of you dearly. I'll see you next month. ■

(If you would like to follow this series online, you can do so at: <https://renewedheartministries.com/Esights/01-15-2016>)

[1] *Shabbat* 31a, in A. Cohen, ed., *Everyman's Talmud* (New York, 1975), p. 65.

Schedule

MAY 20 - 22, 2016

Spokane Valley Adventist Church
 Spokane Valley, WA, USA
 509.926.5866

JUNE 10 - 12, 2016

White Rock SDA Church
 Surry, BC Canada
 604.538.3303

JUNE 24 - 26, 2016

AWC
 Phoenix, AZ, USA
 480.878.8565

AUGUST 5 - 7, 2016

Carmichael Adventist Church
 Sacramento, CA, USA
 916.487.8684

Two New Ways to Support the work of RHM!



What is AmazonSmile?

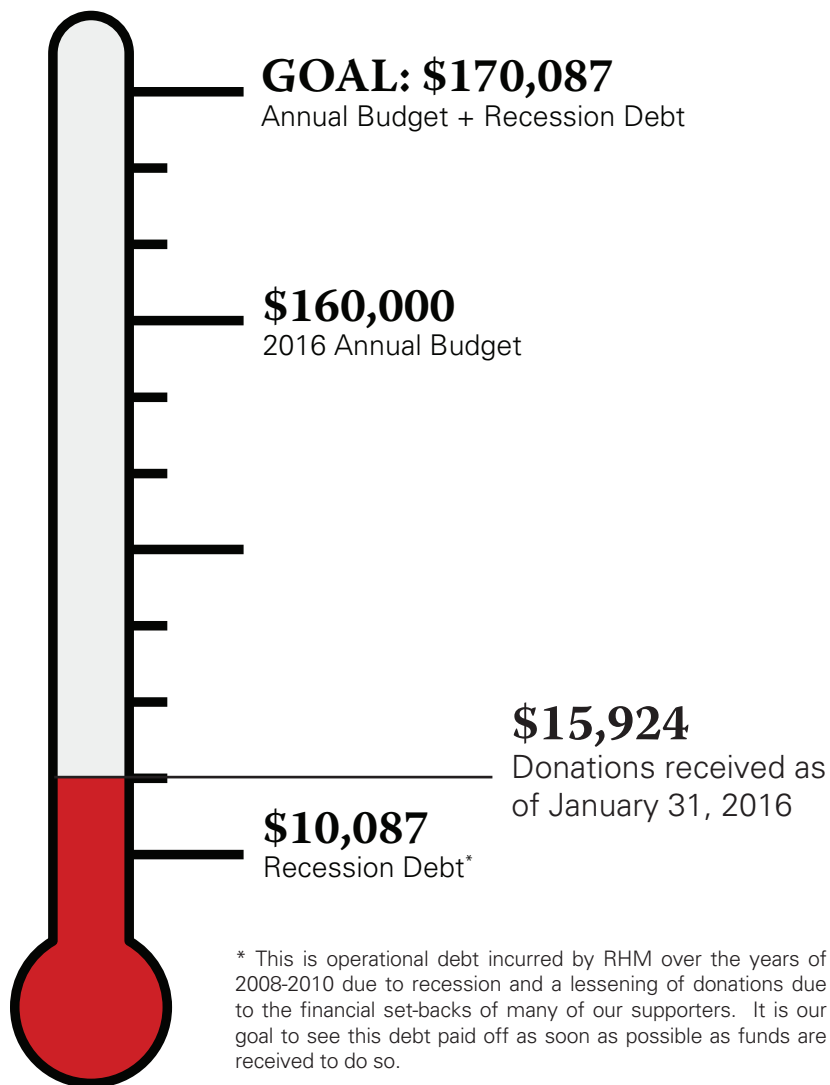
AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that **Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization.**

You can find us in Amazon's Smile Directory at:

<http://smile.amazon.com>



Benevity is an easy way for companies and employees to make a difference. Many corporate employers use Benevity to set up matching funds from the employer for contributions made by their employees. Benevity enables employees to connect with corporate giving & matching programs and make secure, efficient electronic donations through their employers. One such example is Google. Google offers a matching program with their employee who makes contributions to non-profits registered with Benevity. The good news is that Renewed Heart Ministries is now one of 70,000 charities who are registered. So check and see if your employer uses Benevity, and if they do you could be as much as doubling your contribution to RHM at no cost to yourself. This is a win-win all the way around.



Featured Presentation



The Radically Inclusive Jesus

by Herb Montgomery

This is the first presentation in a series of four that Herb had the honor of giving last summer at an event entitled *Engage, Empower, Explore*. We feel all four presentations would be well worth your time, and so for this March, we will be featuring the first in that line up. Our hope is that you won't stop at just this one, but that your heart would be renewed, equipped and empowered to follow Jesus more deeply as you listen to them all.

You can find the entire series at:

<https://renewedheartministries.com/presentation/2015-Kinship-Kampmeeting>

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

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:
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As always, all proceeds received above and beyond our budgeted needs are passed on to other proven and charitable, non-profit organizations who are making significant changes in the lives of the poor.

