



RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

# αwakenings

"Only by love is love awakened."

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



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Herb Montgomery

**“Can a blind person show the way to a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit?” (Q 6:39)**

**Luke 6:39:** “He also told them this parable: ‘Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit?’”

**Matthew 15:14:** “Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”

**Gospel of Thomas 34:** Jesus says: “If a blind person leads a blind person, both will fall into a pit.”

The earliest record of a saying like the one we’re considering today is more than 200 years older than the time of Jesus:

Abiding in the midst of ignorance, thinking themselves wise and learned, fools go aimlessly hither and thither, like blind led by the blind. (Katha Upanishad; *The Upanishads* written between 800 BCE–200 BCE.)<sup>[1]</sup>

Two other early references to this metaphor appear in North India and Rome during the first century BCE. In North India, the Buddhist Pali Canon recorded an oral tradition story in 29 BCE:

Suppose there were a row of blind men, each holding on to the one in front of him: the first one doesn’t see, the middle one doesn’t see, the last one doesn’t see. In the same way, the statement of the Brahmins turns out to be a row of blind men, as it were: the first one doesn’t see, the middle one doesn’t see, the last one doesn’t see. (Canki Sutta)<sup>[2]</sup>

In Rome, a similar phrase is found in the writings of Quintus Horatius Flaccus (Horace), a leading Roman lyric poet during the time of Augustus, who lived from 65 BCE to 8 BCE:

“*Caecus caeco dux*” [“the blind leader of the blind”]. *Epistles* 1.17.3-4

The Jewish community that treasured the sayings of Jesus in Sayings Gospel Q included this metaphor as one Jesus used. We’ll look at Luke’s and Matthew’s versions of this saying in just a moment.

First, Jesus wasn’t talking about physical

vision. He was talking about perception, ignorance, and an unwillingness to learn, and the danger this becomes when one is in a position of influence. I’ve experienced this personally this year. In my small town of Lewisburg and statewide here in West Virginia, I’ve witnessed ignorant leaders influencing the masses that follow them, inciting them to be afraid of those they are unwilling to genuinely “see” for who they are.

At the end of last year, our local city council began the process of updating the city’s nondiscrimination ordinance. Lewisburg’s nondiscrimination ordinance already included discrimination based on race, gender, sex, and religion. The city felt the need to also include gender identification and sexual orientation, to broaden the current nondiscrimination ordinance to include members of the LGBTQ community. This effort came when a coal miner with over a decade of employment was hazed, vehicle vandalized, and fired after getting married when the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage last summer. In West Virginia, a person can be evicted from their housing or fired from their job because of their orientation.

During the campaign to change this ordinance, one of the council members asked my wife and me, “Every person is somebody’s child. How would you like your child to be treated?” Regardless of what differences may exist among people, *everyone* should have a fair chance to qualify for work, to provide for themselves, and have a safe roof over their head at night. My family believes that, and not just for our own children.

Not long after that conversation, a local minister of the largest Baptist church in Lewisburg began to incite his congregation to fear. Choosing not to perceive members of the LGBTQ community for who they are, he began a campaign of dehumanization and mischaracterization. Out-of-town lobbyists we invited, rallies were held, signs were placed all over town. The message, like Seth Brundle’s in the 1986 horror film *The Fly* was, “Be afraid. Be very, very afraid.” Some of the most moral, ethically upstanding

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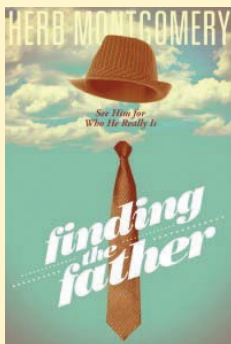
## The Blind Leading the Blind

by Herb Montgomery

### 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: [renewedheartministries.com/presentation/Finding-the-Father](http://renewedheartministries.com/presentation/Finding-the-Father)





## Blind Leading the Blind cont'd from page 2

people I know belong to our local LGBTQ community, so the minister's campaign was nothing short of slander. But the folks here in small town West Virginia don't have the exposure or education to be able to "see" people unlike them for themselves. This was a classic example of "the blind leading the blind."

Despite that rampant misinformation, in February of this year, our city council unanimously voted to update our city's nondiscrimination policy. I'm also happy to say that it has been over a month now in our sleepy little town and the world has not come to an end.

After this decision though, many of the people who were working locally to incite fear and misinformation moved their effort to the state level to try to undo the local vote. Lobbyists got legislators to introduce a new bill that was a West Virginia version of the "religious freedom" bills that have been popping up all over the U.S. Over and over again, those responsible for this bill denied their bill was connected to the discrimination ordinance but was simply designed to "restore" religious freedom they claimed had been lost (yet they could not show where or how).

This new bill passed in the state House but was voted down in the Senate. What made the difference? The Senate amended the bill to state that its provisions could not be used to undermine nondiscrimination ordinances in the name of religious liberty. Legislators then dropped the bill, proving that it had nothing to do with religious liberty, but was rather designed to give people a legal loop hole for continuing discrimination against others in the name of their "sincerely held religious belief."

Yes, each person should be free in matters between themselves and their God, with at least one exception. When one's sincerely held religious beliefs endanger another human being, one is never free to practice those beliefs. Once, child sacrifice was a sincerely held religious belief. For some people, racism is still a sincerely held religious belief. Subjugation of women is a sincerely held religious belief, and homophobia and heterosexism are also sincerely held religious beliefs.



## *The Blind Leading the Blind* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder

Religion has done good. And religion has done great harm. We must encourage the good while we limit the harm. The freedom to practice what one believes is a value that must be held subject to the greater value of "do no harm to one's neighbor." Anyone our religious beliefs would endanger has the right to be protected from our sincerely held religious beliefs. While we possess freedom of religion, they also possess the right to live in freedom *from* our religion.

So what does this have to do with the blind leading the blind?

I took a day to go and visit my state capitol and speak directly with my local representatives in both the House and the Senate about our religious freedom bill. What I was overwhelmed with as I left that day, beside disillusionment of the system, was how "blind" two of my three local representatives had been to understanding what was really behind this bill. Only one of the three understood. The truth did eventually come out, but in the meantime, the depth of ignorance and lack of exposure of my local and state leaders left me speechless.

In both secular civil governance and religious faith and worship, the metaphor of the blind leading the blind is, at times, overwhelmingly appropriate.

Now, there are plenty of instances in first-century Palestine where Jesus could have applied this metaphor.

- The faithful, radical Zealots who felt the only way to liberate Palestine

from Roman domination was through violence.

- The Jerusalem-centered aristocracy who, in order to preserve their own place in society, coopted the Temple to add religious legitimacy to Rome's imperialism.
- The wealthy elite who failed to share their surplus with the poor and instead used their capital to exploit the poor and make greater wealth.
- The group of Pharisees and Sanhedrin members who subscribed to the teachings of the school of Shammai, and who not only drew strict lines between Jew and Gentile but also drew lines between themselves and other Jewish people they perceived as not orthodox enough.

How do Matthew and Luke show Jesus using this parable?

Luke includes this as one of Jesus's sayings in the body of teachings scholars call *The Sermon on the Plain*.

He also told them this parable: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher. (Luke 6:39-40)

Matthew does something quite different, and his use of the saying begins with Mark's underlying narrative.

In Mark 7, Jesus contrasts physical "defilement" with ritual "defilement."

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# Ninth Annual Frontiers of Faith

February 26–27, 2016  
Dodgeville, WI

In February, I was given the wonderful experience of being the guest speaker for a group in Wisconsin that comes together once a year for a forward-looking weekend it calls *Frontiers of Faith*. This group began almost a decade ago as a safe place for attendees to ask questions as they looked out on the horizon of where they felt their faith was tending.

I was asked to share four presentations on the sayings of the Jewish Jesus of Nazareth that scholars believe belong to the *Sayings Gospel Q*.

(For more information, see the new series that we are presently engaged in: <https://renewedheartministries.com/Eights/01-08-2016>)

The four presentation I gave were as follows:

*Blessed Are the Poor*  
*Persecution, Enemy Love, and*  
*Nonviolence*

*The Golden Rule*  
*The Lord's Prayer and Jesus'*  
*"Reign of God"*

The information we covered in the first of these three presentations you can access in our eSight series, and the last presentation's information will be covered there shortly.

This was fantastic weekend for me personally. I had the opportunity to see some old friends again as well as meet some new ones, including a couple I had previously become acquainted with through Facebook. The attendees I had the chance to speak with were exceptional folks. I want to emphasize and affirm the genuine freedom I felt in such a safe environment. Leaning into truth can be very unsettling for many. There is a process of deconstruction and reconstruction any time truth is investigated. If something is true, I am a deep believer that it can withstand scrutiny. If something is not true, then it is better to grieve its loss and move on. Many avoid this entire process, in my opinion, foundationally because of grief avoidance. They want to avoid the grief and worldview change that come through discovering something they

have held dear isn't really true after all. I believe deeply that this experience is an integral part of making this world a safer, more compassionate home for us all. This group doesn't shy away from this process but wants to move more fully into it.

In a word, spending time with this group was refreshing for me personally. Many also reciprocated by sharing what a blessing this weekend of looking at the sayings of the historical Jesus was for them too.

I look forward to tracking with this group in the future and the bright horizon that lies ahead of it.

Thank you for inviting me to be a part of your discussions, your questions, and your searching to broaden your understanding and take action toward creating a better world this year. You are an inspiration and an encouragement to me. I love seeing this type of environment more and more among professed Jesus followers.

Again, if you would like to track with RHM on the sayings of the historical Jesus, please join us at <https://renewedheartministries.com/Eights/01-08-2016>.

## Blind Leading the Blind cont'd from page 3

The text mistakenly claims that "all the Jews" do not eat without first washing their hands. This is historically untrue,

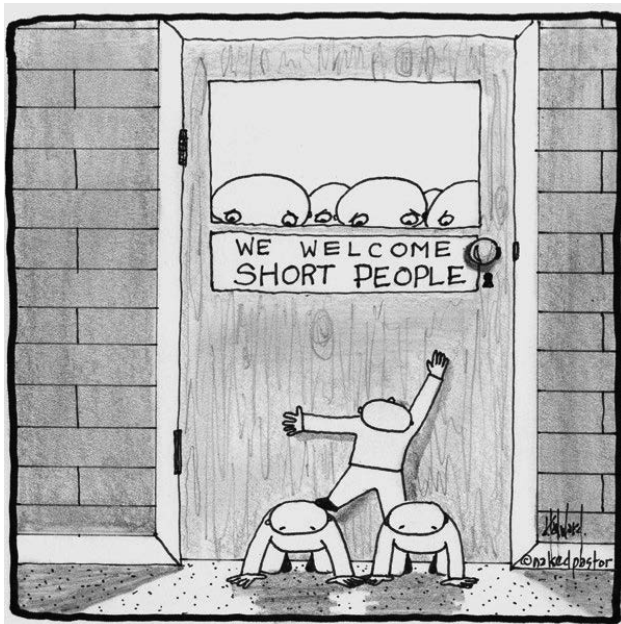
and the later Matthew and Luke, knowing this to be untrue, correct the error by leaving it out. (Compare Mark 7, Matthew 15, and Luke 11:37-41) In fact, among the Pharisees, only Pharisees of the school of Shammai would have washed their hands before eating, and only the *priests* (according to both Hillel and Shammai) were required to wash their hands before eat their food. (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Handwashing\\_in\\_Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Handwashing_in_Judaism)) That is, the rest of the people who were not priests were not legally required to wash their hands. But the stricter Pharisees *chose* to conduct themselves like the priests, believing that they also held a *scholarly* position in Jerusalem's religious hierarchy. So it was not a requirement for all Jews during Jesus's time.

By refusing to wash his hands in the presence of the Pharisees, Jesus was making a political statement. I believe he was aligning himself with the "common" people of his day as opposed to the religious "elite." In all three gospels, Jesus turns the discussion from washing hands to the religiously-justified oppression of the poor by the wealthy, religious elite of his day. As we've discussed in previous weeks, the religious elite included the priests and some *wealthy* Pharisees.

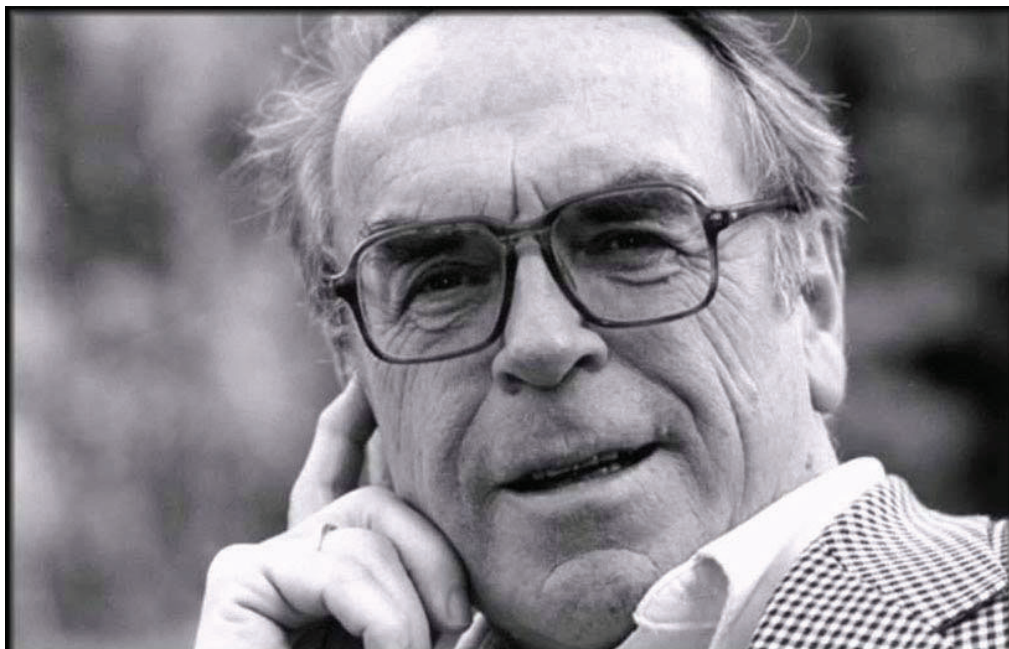
This is where our saying from Matthew comes in this week:

Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?" He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." (Matthew 15:12-14)

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“The resurrection faith is not proved true by means of historical evidence, or only in the next world. It is proved **here** and **now**, through the courage for **revolt**, the **protest** against deadly powers, and the self-giving of men and women for the victory of life . . . This movement of the Spirit is the divine ‘**liberation** movement’ . . .”  
—Jürgen Moltmann; *The Power of the Powerless*

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#### Blind Leading the Blind cont'd from page 4

The context of this saying in our most Jewish gospel is Jesus's preferential option for the poor, the common people, and even those judged as unorthodox.

We can pair this week's metaphor, "blindness," to the one we discussed last week, "deafness." The inability or unwillingness to listen to the stories of those whose experience is different than your own is what these metaphors are describing. Could it be that the cure for sociopolitical "blindness" is using our ears to listen to the stories of those unlike ourselves? By listening, our eyes can be opened and we can begin to "hear with our ears" "see with our eyes" and "understand with our hearts" and our blindness can be "healed." (Compare Isaiah 6:10; Matthew 13:14-17; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40.)

I believe that those who desire to follow the teachings of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish Jesus of Nazareth must learn to *listen* to each other. Especially, we must learn to listen to those who, as in Jesus's

time, are *presently* being marginalized and subjugated by social structures of privilege.

We must learn to stop debating *about* people who are being oppressed by the status quo, and begin listening *to them* instead. Those interested in leaning into this exercise of listening, consider beginning with listening to the experience of people of color. There are other demographics that you could start with, but this would be an excellent first step. Three books that I can recommend to get you started on your journey of listening are:

*The Cross and the Lynching Tree*  
by James H. Cone

*God of the Oppressed*  
by James H. Cone

*A Black Liberation Theology*  
(Fortieth Anniversary Edition)  
by James H. Cone

As we use our ears, our eyes become opened. The cure for healing our eyes is in letting others have our ears and thereby access our hearts.

In the words of the Jesus of *Sayings Gospel Q*:

*Can a blind person show the way to a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit?* (Q 6:39)

## HeartGroup Application

One of the purposes of HeartGroups is to facilitate a space where we can begin to learn how to listen to each other. Yet even this is not enough. Too often the groups we listen to are the ones we most identify with. In other words, we listen to people who are most like ourselves. This can create a ideological feedback loop that becomes precious little more than philosophical inbreeding. The type of listening that cures our blindness is when we listen to those who are *unlike* us, especially those harmed by the way things are.

This week, I invite your HeartGroups to:

1. Together, watch the recently released film *Enough Room at the Table*. You can access the film at <http://enoughroomfilm.com>. It will only cost your group \$0.99 to watch together. That's unbelievably affordable.
2. Discuss with your group, after watching the film, how your group could begin taking steps to become more diverse. List the steps you discuss.
3. Pick one item on your list to practice.

Thank you for joining us this week. We'll continue with *Sayings Gospel Q* next week.

Until then, keep living in love, till the only world that remains is a world where only love reigns. ■

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

[1] Juan Mascaró. *The Upanishads* (Penguin Classics, 1965) p. 58

[2] *Canki Sutta* [http://accesstosight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.095x.than.html/Majjhima Nikaya 95](http://accesstosight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.095x.than.html/Majjhima%20Nikaya%2095)), translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

# RHM Has A New Logo!

We recently updated the logo for Renewed Heart Ministries, upgrading from a pixel-based graphic to a vector image. This is the third update to RHM's logo over the last nine years, and we thought now would be a perfect time to share the history of our logo's metamorphosis.

## 2007 Logo



Our original 2007 logo was made up of three elements: light, a heart, and a cross.

### LIGHT

From the beginning of our work, we've been passionate about illuminating the darkness. Whether we were using information to illuminate ignorance, truth to illuminate misunderstanding, or love to illuminate fear, selfishness, or hatred, we've always been motivated by two statements from the canonical gospels on light, Jesus, and Jesus's followers:

"I am the light of the world."  
(John 8:12)

"You are the light of the world."  
(Matthew 5:14)

### HEART

The heart is part of our name, and is also where we have always believed real change takes place. Whether among individuals or in our societies, change takes place in the hearts of people first and foremost.

The heart in our logo reminds us to focus on change taking place within each of us rather than just in the form of mere outward conformity to a set of rules, ethics, or moral guidelines. Renewing human hearts by being a source of light in the darkened sectors of our world is at the heart of all we do.

This element is also based on these passages in the gospels.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." (Matthew 5:8)

"A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of." (Luke 6:45)

"If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23)

### CROSS

When we began this work in 2007, we believed that everything we did centered on the light (insight and truth) streaming from the cross of Jesus. We did not believe that Jesus' death satisfied the demands of retributive cosmic justice. Rather we taught that Jesus revealed love for his enemies in his death and forgiveness—bearing the trespasses of others against one—toward the entire world.

Then in 2012 we began to perceive something deeper within the gospel stories that would lead to our first logo change two years ago.

## 2014 Logo



### THE RESURRECTION

In 2014, we replaced the icon of light streaming from the cross with an image of light streaming from an empty tomb.

We made this graphic change as we digested the truth that the good news the early church proclaimed was not primarily that Jesus was executed but that he had been resurrected. We were inspired by these texts:

"With great power the apostles continued to *testify* to the *resurrection* of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 4:33, emphasis added.)

"We tell you the *good news*: What God promised our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by *raising* up Jesus." (Acts 13:32,33, emphasis added.)

"Paul was preaching the *good news about Jesus and the resurrection*." (Acts 17:18, emphasis added.)

"This man was given to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. *But God raised him from the dead*." (Acts 2:23-24, emphasis added.)

"You killed the author of life, *but God raised him from the dead*. We are witnesses of this." (Acts 3:15, emphasis added.)

"It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified *but whom God raised from the dead...*" (Acts 4:10, emphasis added.)

"*The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead*—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross." (Acts 5:30, emphasis added.)

"We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, *but God raised him from the dead...*" (Acts 10:39-40, emphasis added.)

Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. *But God raised him from the dead*. (Acts 13:29-30, emphasis added.)

For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:31)

Jesus died for standing up to the status quo in solidarity with the exploited and disinherited of his day. The resurrection symbolizes Divine protest against Jesus's execution, the undoing and reversal of his death. As he laid in the tomb, yet another occurrence of extinguished hope in the hearts of the oppressed and subjugated, his followers asked whether the violence

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## ...New Logo cont'd from page 6

of domination and oppression would ever be reversed. When they discovered Jesus's empty tomb, they asked a new set of questions: Was the body moved to a more permanent resting place? Was the body taken and hidden? Or did they dare hope for more? Did they dare to hope that the Universe is actually on the side of the oppressed and subjugated after all?

We included the empty tomb in our logo to help us remember this Divine protest. Even today, the light streaming from Jesus's empty tomb renews, for those who have lost all hope, the hope that this world can ultimately become a safer and more compassionate home for us all.

## 2016 Logo

This year, we had some technical reasons for moving away from our old pixellated logo. Anyone who works with logos will tell you that logos are meant to be vector. They look cleaner and scale well.

We didn't want to lose our old elements: the heart, the empty tomb, the light that illuminates our hearts and shining from the empty tomb.

But we also wanted to do something that visually represented the light that we experience and teach about at Renewed Heart Ministries.

Light, after all, is not really just one color (white). Light is a *spectrum* of colors. And what could be more fitting for this community? It takes all of our voices to make the world a safer, more compassionate place. It takes valuing each person's story and experience. Many times we are neither *this* nor *that*, but find ourselves somewhere on a spectrum with multiple philosophies or identities, and it's these various colors shining in our hearts and out for all to see that make our world a beautiful place.

So our logo is still composed of three main elements: focus on changed hearts, hope from Jesus's open, empty tomb, and

light outshining the oppression in our world. And this light represents the combined participation and inclusion of every one of us.

With happy hearts, renewed hope, and an inclusive welcome, we introduce to you our new vector logo for Renewed Heart Ministries:



Thank you for joining us on this journey.



## RHM Monthly Book Recommendation

By popular request, we are beginning a book recommendation list from Renewed Heart Ministries.

These are books that we believe are beneficial to read for those who are journeying with Renewed Heart Ministries. This list is in no way an endorsement or 100% agreement with everything written in every book we will be recommending. We simply believe the voices of the authors of the books that make the list do make significant contributions to understanding what it means to follow Jesus. We refuse to take an all or nothing approach. Different voices and different perspectives matter. And as we learn to listen, our journey and our understanding grows.

If you will track with us by reading each book each month, at the

beginning of each year (February), upon your communication to us that you have read each book for from the previous year, we will be sending out certificates from RHM stating that you have completed the past year's reading curriculum. This year you luck out because 2016 will only be comprised of 9 books rather than 12. We will need to hear from you by January 31<sup>st</sup> each year in order to send your certificate. You can contact us at:

MAIL:  
PO Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901

EMAIL:  
[info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com)

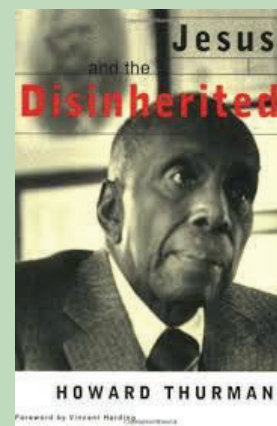
WEB:  
[renewedheartministries.com/  
Contact-forms?form=ContactUs](http://renewedheartministries.com/Contact-forms?form=ContactUs)

Also, if you happen to order books through Amazon.com, we would like to remind you to select Renewed Heart Ministries as the non-profit of your choice in Amazon Smile. At no

additional cost to you, a portion of the book's purchase will go to support the work of Renewed Heart Ministries.

**We are happy to announce our first book for 2016. April's recommended book is:**

Howard Thurman's,  
***Jesus and the Disinherited***  
(Beacon Press, reprint edition, 2012; originally published 1949).



Renewed Heart Ministries is a not-for-profit group that is passionate about rediscovering, following and helping others rediscover the teachings and sayings of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. We believe these teachings have an intrinsic value in informing the work of nonviolently confronting, liberating and transforming our world into safe, more just, more compassionate home for us all.

Everything we do here at Renewed Heart Ministries is for free. Even the many educational events that we do in various venues. If you'd like to support our work you can make a one-time gift or become one of our monthly contributors by going to [RenwedHeartministries.com](http://RenwedHeartministries.com) and clicking the donate tab at the top right.

Or you can mail contributions to:  
**Renewed Heart Ministries**  
**P.O. Box 1211**  
**Lewisburg, WV 24901**

Also, please sign up for our free resources and remember, every little bit helps.

Anything we receive over and above our annual budget we happily give away to other not-for-profits who are making both systemic and personal differences, significant differences, in lives of those not presently benefited but the status quo.

And to those already supporting the work of Renewed Heart Ministries, your generous support makes it possible for us to exist and to continue being a presence for positive change in our world. So with all of our hearts, "Thank You."

Together we are making a difference, till the only world that remains is a world where only Love reigns.

# Schedule

## APRIL 29 - MAY 7, 2016

New Horizons SDA Church -  
 Nixa SDA Church  
 Republic - Nixa, MO, USA  
 417.463.0604

## 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

# Featured Presentation

## **The End of Poverty** by Herb Montgomery

Dorothy Day once wrote, "We need always to be thinking and writing about poverty, for if we are not among its victims its reality fades from us. We must talk about poverty, because people insulated by their own comfort lose sight of it." (*Little By Little: The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day*.) This month we are pleased to feature a presentation from our *Revolutionary Jesus* series, **The End of Poverty** by Herb Montgomery. It is our hope that as you listen your heart will be *renewed* and inspired to continue following the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth passionately

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