



RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

# αwakenings

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries ::::: January 2017 :::::

HAPPY NEW YEAR  
2017



Ali

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Herb Montgomery

**“And why do you see the speck in your brother’s eye, but the beam in your own eye you overlook? How can you say to your brother: Let me throw out the speck from your eye, and just look at the beam in your own eye? Hypocrite, first throw out from your own eye the beam, and then you will see clearly to throw out the speck in your brother’s eye.”**

**(Q 6:41-42)**

**Luke 6:41-42:** “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

**Matthew 7:3-5:** “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

**Gospel of Thomas 26:** “Jesus says: ‘You see the splinter that is in your brother’s eye, but you do not see the beam that is in your own eye. When you remove the beam from your own eye, then you will see clearly enough to remove the splinter from your brother’s eye.’”

This week, we are looking at a saying of Jesus that’s become quite well-known here in the U.S. thanks to the culture wars of the last century. The saying has various names, but the two most popular are *The Mote and the Beam* or *Jesus’s Discourse on Judgmentalism*.

This saying is at the root of Tony Campolo’s popular retort, “Jesus did not teach ‘love the sinner, hate the sin.’ Jesus taught ‘love the sinner, hate your own sin.’” (Read Campolo’s article, *Why Love the Sinner Hate the Sin Doesn’t Work*.) Historically, Campolo is right: the phrase “hate the sin, love the sinner”

doesn’t come from Jesus. It came from a phrase that St. Augustine used in one of his 5th Century letters: “*Cum dilectione hominum et odio vitiorum*” (Letter 211). The Latin can be translated “With love for mankind and hatred of sins.” But we have no record of Jesus ever using this phrase or any like it. It is a phrase that Christians have used, but one that is foreign to the teachings of Jesus. Mahatma Gandhi also gave a pointed response to it in his time as he reflected on the legacy of the Christian British colonialists in India:

“Man and his deed are two distinct things. Whereas a good deed should call forth approbation and a wicked deed disapprobation, the doer of the deed, whether good or wicked, always deserves respect or pity as the case may be. ‘Hate the sin and not the sinner’ is a precept which, though easy enough to understand, *is rarely practiced*, and that is why the poison of *hatred* spreads in the world...For we are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of one and the same Creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. *To slight a single human being* is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being, but with him the whole world.” [Gandhi, Mohandas K.; Desai, Mahadev (2008-08-27). *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth* (pp. 143-144). Emphasis added.]

For Jesus, if one wanted to be a source of healing and help in the wider world, the place to begin was with *introspection*. Ultimately this close attention does go beyond one’s self—“*then you will see clearly to throw out the speck in your brother’s eye.*”—but it does begin with one’s self “first.” What does this mean?

I can’t answer this question for you, but I can share with you what it has meant for me.

## Introspection: My Experience

I’m a white, cisgender, heterosexual American man. I have to come to grips with what that means in this society before I can help to make the world a safer, more compassionate place. When it comes to privilege in America, with the exception of not having degrees

**cont’d on page 3**

## Speck and Beam

Originally Posted Online on April 15, 2016

by Herb Montgomery

## Quotable Quotes

*“To speak about a theology of liberation is to seek an answer to the following question: what relation is there between salvation and the historical process of human liberation?”*

– Gustavo Gutierrez  
*A Theology of Liberation:  
15th Anniversary Edition*

## Speck and Beam cont'd from page 2

from institutions of higher learning, I'm the poster child, and I have to explore my blind spots before I can deeply serve others who are different from me.

I've learned that I cannot do this alone. I could probably make some progress by sitting quietly, contemplating my place in the status quo. But I'm not sure that listening to the voices within my own head would produce that much change: it would only push me deeper into my own perceptions. What I need is the voices of others.

There are many ways one can encounter others' voices. As I shared last week, I have chosen a non-defensive posture of listening to those whose experience is not like my own. I have also encountered others by reading as many books as I can digest from those whose perspectives are different from mine.

I'll give you two examples.

Two winters ago, Drew Hart, author of *Trouble I've Seen*, Rod Thomas from *The Resist Daily*, and others hosted a Twitter chat with the hashtag #JamesConeWasRight. They were inspired by Cone's writings, and looked at events in Ferguson, Missouri, and other areas of the U.S. through the lens of what Hart calls "Anablacktivism"—Anabaptist Black activism. (You can read this chat for yourself at [storify.com/h00die\\_R/jamesconewasright-an-anablacktivist-chat](http://storify.com/h00die_R/jamesconewasright-an-anablacktivist-chat)).

I had just begun reading James Cone when this chat happened, so I decided to follow along and just listen.

During the comments, someone mentioned a point of Cone's which was also taught by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Someone else replied that they should not run from Cone to White, European,



male theologians so quickly. I felt my internal defensiveness surge.

"What?" I thought. Bonhoeffer stood up to oppression in solidarity with the Jewish citizens of Germany, but now we were just going to lump him in with all other White European theologians just because he was white and male? Where did that leave me?

This was the only time I was tempted to jump into the flow of the conversation rather than simply listen. But I heard a voice inside me say, "There it is! Sit on that. *Just listen!*"

As I kept listening I began to see how much the Church has privileged White theologians' opinions and contributions, and I also saw the great need to center theological discussions and understandings in womanist, feminist, Black, Latin, and queer theologies as well. I realized that it was inappropriate to consider theology by White theologians "real theology" while downgrading theology done by other kinds of people to a lesser category. Other theological perspectives are just as valuable as White

theology, and for me who grew into Christianity with only White theologians as my authorities and teachers they are even *more* valuable because I need to broaden my view of the Church. (A great read if you would like to explore this further is the book I quoted from last week, *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity* by James W. Perkinson.).

Sitting with the chat comments rather than defensively responding on behalf of a writer I still respect gave me a chance to see that bigger picture. It also challenged me not to get stuck in self-defense or even self-pity, and keep reaching out to others I needed to learn from.

The second way I've learned to listen is not just by recognizing which theologians aren't privileged in the Christian community but by actually reading these theologians' work.

Again, as a white, cis-hetero, male Christian, I must choose to listen to those who approach theology and who follow Jesus from a different perspective than my own. The theologians I wasn't exposed

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## A Weekend in Benicia

**Benicia, CA**

**November 4-6, 2016**

Last November a dream of mine came true. I had the opportunity to share a weekend of presentations with my dear friend Keith Giles who lives in Orange, California. I met Keith a few years ago when I was looking for more non-hierarchical, non-kyriarchical ways of forming spiritual communities who

we commit to respect, nurture and support all within our group. These groups are also not so much focused on homogenous "dogma" or "worship" as they are focused on a shared spiritual communion. They are passionate about living out Jesus' teachings in relation to compassionate action and transformative justice together.

I had such a blast sharing this weekend with Keith. He and I resonate on so many levels and with so many interests. I feel



desired to put into practice some of the ethical teachings of the historical Jesus. Keith was part of my journey when I was encountering what some call organic church. My weekend in Benicia was a culmination of that journey as Keith and I co-shared about what organic church is and how those interested could begin forming their spiritual communities into more egalitarian structures, where every person's voice is heard and every person's story matters.

Renewed Heart Ministries' HeartGroups are a hybrid of some of the more positive elements of the organic church movement combined with a vision of a world where people take care of people, which was at the heart of Jesus's sayings. These are communities where we can experiment with the practice of love, which includes mutual aid, resource sharing, and voluntary redistribution of means. These are communities where people take responsibility for taking care of one another. HeartGroups are built on the model Jesus' non-kyriarchal, non-homogenous shared table where we value the voices, stories, and experiences of all people. These are groups where

very fortunate to be able to call him friend.

In addition to all I just mentioned, so many of my friends who I had not seen in ages traveled from various parts of Northern California to show up for this weekend. I saw friends from the San Francisco area, as far away as Paradise and Stockton, and even some from further south around the Monterrey Bay area and Hollister. It was wonderful to spend time with each of them again.

I want to thank DorAnne Donesky and Larry Muth specifically for putting the whole weekend together and hosting everyone. You two were fabulous hosts!

And for those who were not able to attend, but the above descriptions sound inviting, we are launching a new HeartGroups page on RHM's website in the coming new year. This page will be full of information to get you started. Keep a look out for it and we'll announce it, too, when it is released.

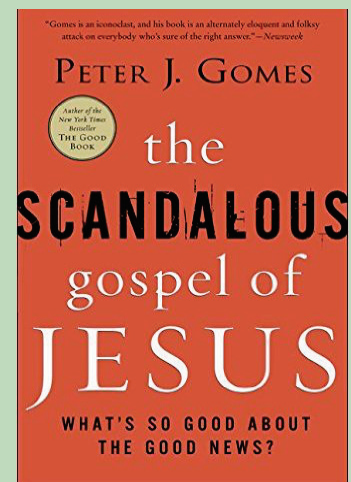
Thank you to everyone who made our time together in Benicia truly special. We are in this together, and together we can choose to make our world a safer, just, more compassionate home for us all.

## RHM's 2017 Annual Reading Course Book for January

If you've read all of 2016's book we need to know by the end of January so we can get your certificates to you. We are pleased to announce that this year we are kicking off our 2017 list with the excellent book:

### ***The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus***

by Peter J. Gomes



"How the Church Domesticated Jesus."

With his unique blend of eloquence and insight, the esteemed Harvard minister Peter J. Gomes invites us to hear anew the radical nature of Jesus' message of hope and change. Using examples from ancient times as well as from modern pop culture, *The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus* shows us why the good news is every bit as relevant today as when it was first preached.

Remember if you do choose to purchase this book through Amazon to use Amazon Smile and select Renewed Heart Ministries as your charity to support our work at no additional cost to yourself.

Happy Reading!

[smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)

### Speck and Beam cont'd from page 3

to during my first few years in Christianity are no more infallible than anyone else. Like me, they also have “specks” in their eyes that need removing. Yet their experience, the experience they use as they approach theology, ethics, and morality gives them a unique advantage at showing me the “beam” in my own eye. A sample of the different theological voices I’ve sought out:

Feminist Theology:

*Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives (Overtures to Biblical Theology)* by Phyllis Trible

Womanist Theology:

*Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* by Delores S. Williams

Liberation Theology:

*A Theology of Liberation: 15th Anniversary Edition* by Gustavo Gutierrez

Black Liberation Theology:

*A Black Theology of Liberation – Fortieth Anniversary Edition* by James H. Cone

Queer Theology:

*The Queer God* by Marcella Althaus-Reid

All five of these lenses have been incredibly helpful as I’ve come to see the “beams” in my eye. Each of these authors has taught me to see how easy it once was for me to judge those who were unlike me, to morally evaluate them while cherishing a subtle or subconscious sense of moral superiority to them. I found it much easier to judge those not like me than to stop and listen.

I’m still on this listening journey, and I’m thankful for those who, out of love, have chosen to be in community with me and help me grow in compassion and understanding. I hope that they grow as well. The world that actually exists is a lot larger than I once believed, and I’m deeply grateful to those who have taken painstaking steps to show it to me

### Introspection for You

What does it mean for you this week to prioritize your own eye-beams rather than rush to others’ eye-specks? Both

Luke’s and Matthew’s gospels describe our “logs” as compared to other people’s “splinters.” And this saying comes in both gospels’ summaries of Jesus’s teachings about judging of others. *Sayings Gospel Q* places it in the same context, whereas the Gospel of Thomas groups this saying with the teachings on taking care of one’s “brother” (see Gospel of Thomas 25-26).

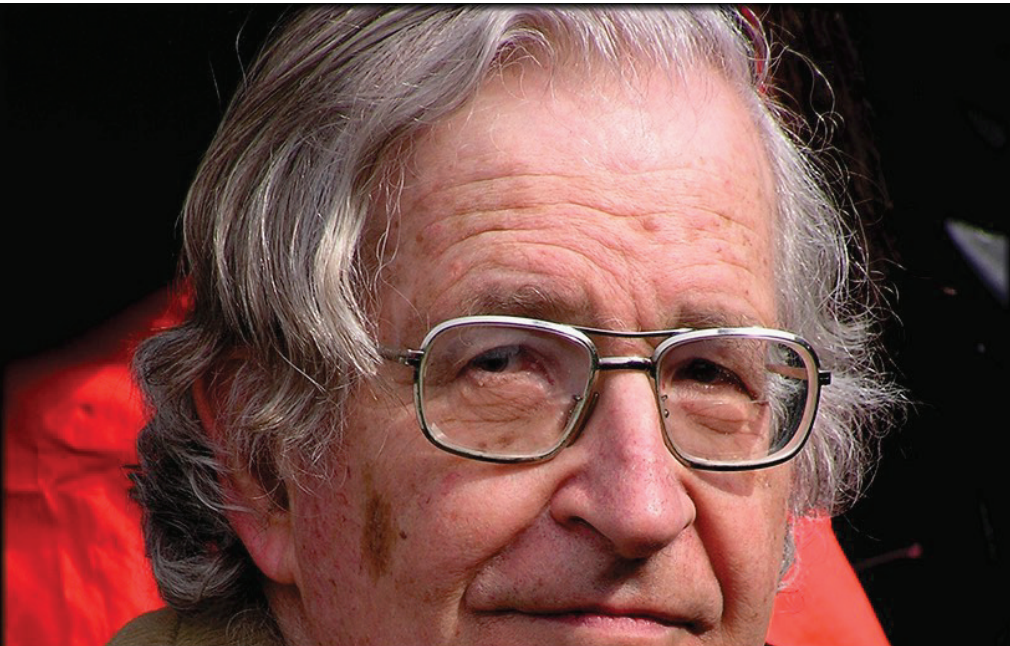
Luke shares this saying with Jesus’s sermon on the plain, and Matthew includes it in Jesus’s sermon on the mount, both locations that represent the core of Jesus’s ethical and moral teachings. Each of the gospel writers felt this teaching about our logs and others’ splinters was central to their memory of Jesus. If Jesus taught that we should begin changing our world by starting with ourselves, what would this mean for you?

Could this challenge the knee jerk response to the movement for Black lives, “All lives matter”? Perhaps it might halt a defensive explanation that “not all Christians are like that” when someone who has been deeply wounded by a Christian shares some of their pain. When a friend laments how they’re treated in this society, Jesus’s teaching could stop me from replying, “Not all men!”

It can at least mean we all hold our initial reflex of defensiveness and take a posture of listening to others. Where it goes from there will be different for each person, but we have to come to grips with the fact that the greatest obstacles to a safer, more just, more compassionate world for us will not be the dust in another’s eyes but the beams that are in our own.

For all those who desire to lean more deeply into the teachings of Jesus, into making the world a safer, more just, more compassionate home for us all, all who want to become more keenly aware of your own blind spots:

*“And why do you see the speck in your brother’s eye, but the beam in your own eye you overlook? How can you say to your brother: Let me throw out the speck from your eye, and just look at the beam in your own eye? Hypocrite, first throw out from your own eye the beam, and then you will see clearly to throw out the speck in your brother’s eye.” (Q 6:41-42)*



“Jesus himself, and most of the message of the Gospels, is a message of **service to the poor**, a **critique of the rich and the powerful**, and a **pacifist doctrine**. And it remained that way, that’s what Christianity was up . . . until Constantine. Constantine shifted it so the cross, which was **the symbol of persecution of somebody working for the poor**, was put on the shield of the Roman Empire. It became the symbol for **violence and oppression**, and that’s pretty much what the church has been until the present. In fact, it’s quite striking in recent years, elements of the church, in particular the **Latin American bishops**, but not only them, **tried to go back to the Gospels**.”

—Noam Chomsky; Science in the Dock (March 1, 2006)

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

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# Quotable Quotes

*"There can be no Christian theology that is not identified unreservedly with those who are humiliated and abused."*

— James H. Cone  
*A Black Theology of Liberation*



## Jesus For Everyone Weekly Podcast

**New episodes every Friday.**

December's episodes were:

- Episode 194: *The Sign of Jonah for This Generation*
- Episode 195: *Something More than Solomon and Jonah*
- Episode 196: *The Light on the Lampstand*
- Episode 197: *The Jaundiced Eye Darkens the Body's Light*

**You won't want to miss even one!**

**Get them on iTunes:**

[itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/renewed-heart-ministries/id442036678?ign-mpt=uo%3D4](https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/renewed-heart-ministries/id442036678?ign-mpt=uo%3D4)

**or RHM's website:**

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

**Speck and Beam cont'd from page 5**

## HeartGroup Application

1. This week, pick a book from the list of five above that your HeartGroup will read over the next month.
2. Set a date a month from now to share with each other your responses to what you have read. As you engage the book you've chosen, also engage your fellow HeartGroup participants

in conversation about it to deepen your "beam" removal.

3. At the end of your group's discussion, choose a new action to embrace as a result of what you have read and discussed.

Thank you, once again, for journeying with us as we work through *Sayings Gospel Q*.

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



## Testimonies

"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**

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

— **KG**

"Thank you so much for helping me to see my God in a new way!" — **HS**

"Herb, thank you for your ministry and for answering so many of the questions I've been having. I feel like you get me! Thank you." — **K**

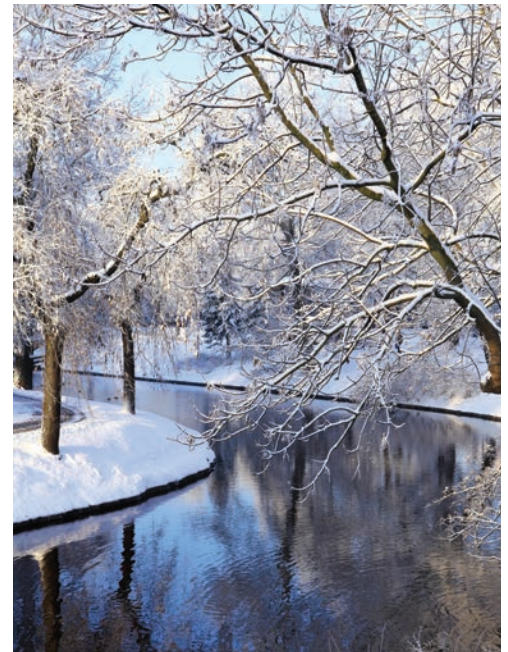
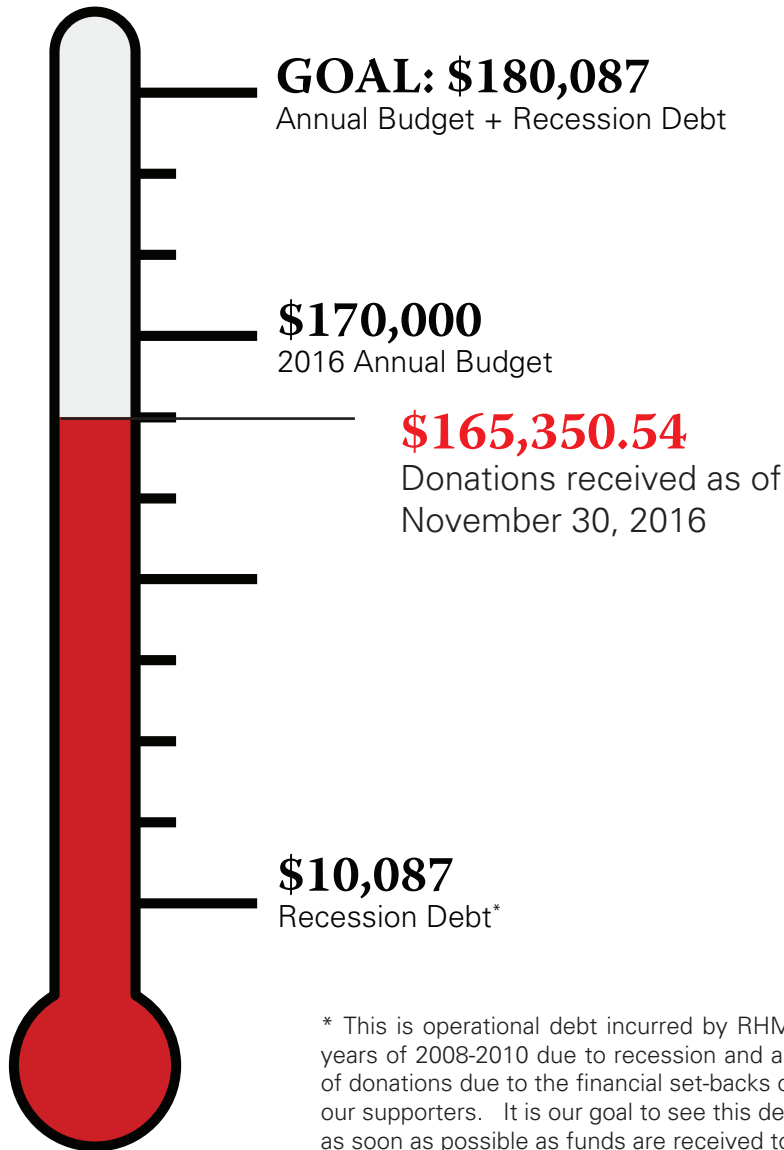
"Thank you Herb for redefining and clarifying what it means for me to be a follower of Jesus. You are also my kids' favorite to listen to." — **NS**

"When Herb came to my school it changed the way I saw God. Awesome!" — **Anonymous**

**2016 Annual Budget as of November. 30, 2016: \$155,832.60**

**Annual Contributions received  
as of November 30, 2016: \$165,350.54**

**November's Contributions: \$18,445.46**



## Schedule

### **FEBRUARY 10 - 12, 2017**

Spirit Alive  
Oshawa, Ontario, Alberta, Canada  
905.571.658

### **FEBRUARY 17 - 18, 2017**

Stanley SDA Church  
Stanley, VA, USA  
540.333.4458

### **MARCH 3 - 5, 2017**

Harvey Adventist Church  
Harvey, ND, USA  
701.580.1676

### **MARCH 24 - APRIL 1, 2017**

Gardner SDA Church  
Gardner, MA, USA  
978.833.4308

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Thank you in advance, and remember, every little bit helps.

You may also do so directly through Renewed Heart Ministries direct link: [smile/amazon.com/ch/20-8663541](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/20-8663541)



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 a 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 [RenewedHeartMinistries.com](http://RenewedHeartMinistries.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.



RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

## Featured Presentation

### *The Gospel of Jesus*

by Herb Montgomery



Happy 2017! We want to begin this new year with a presentation Herb gave last month entitled *The Gospel of Jesus*. We can think of no better way to start off 2017 than taking a moment to focus our attention, not on a gospel about Jesus, but the gospel Jesus himself taught and instructed his followers to also share. (Luke 9.1-2) Our hope is that our hearts will be awakened and renewed to keep following the teachings of Jesus together this coming year!

