



RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

αwakenings

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



Inside This Issue:

Page 2

Not Just Saying
Master, Master

Page 4

F.U.E.L.'s One-Year
Anniversary

RHM Annual Reading
Course Book for March

Page 6

Yeshara

Jesus For Everyone
Podcasts

Page 7

Budget Thermometer

AmazonSmile

Schedule

Page 8

Featured Presentation

World Social Justice Day

Renewed Heart Ministries

P.O. Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901

Phone: 304.520.0030

Email: info@renewedheartministries.com

Follow RHM!



@RenewedHeartMin



Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery

"Why do you call me: Master, Master, and do not do what I say?" (Q 6:46)

Companion Texts:

Luke 6:46, 47: "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like."

Matthew 7:21-24: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock..."

Where We Stand

A couple of years ago, a friend of mine came up to me with concern after one of my evening presentations. We were in the middle of a week-long series on the Sermon of the Mount in the gospel of Matthew. We'd progressed through Jesus's rejection of violence and his teaching on sharing our surplus with the poor, and those two teachings alone were about enough for him. He said, "Herb, I feel like you are just giving us a really difficult way to get to heaven." At that moment, I really didn't understand all that his statement meant. But as I thought about it, some things began to become clear for me.

First, I didn't write the Sermon on the Mount. And yes, there are things in it that are difficult to accept, especially for Americans today. Its statements on nonviolence (e.g. Matthew 5:39) and anti-capitalism (e.g. Matthew 19:23) are potentially un-American. So yes, some things in Matthew's gospel are difficult for us.

But before we chuck the entire message, let's first ask what sector of society we're encountering these teachings from, where we stand in society.

Those of us who are privileged in the status quo always find the teachings of Jesus difficult, whereas those who are subjugated tend to resonate with his teachings as good news. (Both oppressor and oppressed are challenged with the practice of nonviolence, although it challenges them in very different ways.)

So if a saying of Jesus initially strikes you as difficult, first begin by locating yourself within the socioeconomic pyramid, and why your place in society might make his teaching hard to accept.

Second, nowhere in the gospels does Jesus present us with a nice and easy program to follow so we can obtain post-mortem bliss (i.e. heaven.) You won't find it. Jesus' teachings were about the "empire" of God here on earth "in this generation," through people learning how to take care of people. It is Paul's gospel that addresses post-mortem bliss, not Jesus's. Jesus placed before us a vision of things on earth being transformed to be "as they are in heaven." He was not giving us a difficult way to get to heaven, but rather a risky and often deeply challenging way to heal this world. I believe Jesus was showing us a path, a "way," to a safer, more just, more compassionate world for us all through mutual participation and mutual care.

Doing As Jesus Said

G.K. Chesterton is often quoted as saying that the history of Christianity does not prove that the teachings of Jesus have been "tried and found wanting," but that those teachings have been "found difficult and left untried" (What's Wrong with the World). But again, Jesus isn't trying to make it hard for us to get to heaven; he is being honest about how hard it really is to make our world a safer, more just, more compassionate home for everyone. When we tell the truth about this, we don't make following Jesus hard. We are simply honest about how hard it can be for those at the top of our socioeconomic pyramids to follow him. It's easy to worship Jesus. It's easy to hold a cosmological notion about Jesus. It's much more challenging to distill his ethical teachings from a first century Jewish context and apply them to the

cont'd on page 3

Not Just Saying Master, Master

Originally Posted Online on April 29, 2016

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

"For theologians to speak of this God, they too must become interested in politics and economics, recognizing that there is no truth about Yahweh unless it is the truth of freedom as that event is revealed in the oppressed people's struggle for justice in this world."

— James H. Cone
God of the Oppressed

...Master, Master cont'd from page 2

challenges we face in our society today. And it's still more challenging to actually follow through with those actions.

But I believe the challenge is worth it. No medical student graduates from medical school and says, "What a bunch of legalistic professors! All they told me for four years was 'Do this and do that! Do this and don't do that!'" Instead, they go out into the world with a set of skills and perceptions that we all hope will enable them to alleviate suffering in our world.

It's the same with Jesus. Jesus didn't give us a list of doctrines to believe. He left us a set of teachings, wisdom teachings. As we endeavor to put them into practice, our experience grows, our practice becomes more skilled, our listening becomes more honed, and our actions become more intrinsically healing and liberating to those who are not privileged by the current status quo.

Matthew is clear: not everyone who calls Jesus "Lord" will enter the "empire" of God. (I'm beginning to prefer the term "empire" over "kingdom," because I believe it is more historically consistent with the time in which Jesus taught, when that whole region lived under the oppression of the Roman empire.)

Luke is clear, too, that the sayings of Jesus must be "put into practice." This set of teachings includes the "Way" of grace, nonviolence, peace-making, loving enemies, forgiveness, restorative justice, transformative justice, social justice, economic justice, working alongside those who are oppressed, marginalized, disinherited, excluded, a generous inclusivity, a radical sharing, and a community built on the principle that the empire of God is people taking care of people, rather than people competing with people.

If I had to choose between someone who believed in all the cosmological claims about Jesus but did not wish to put into practice the teachings of Jesus, and someone who doubted the cosmological claims but saw intrinsic value in Jesus's

teachings and sought to both understand and practice them in the here and now, I would have to choose the latter. The former has brought too much suffering on our world, whereas the latter endeavors to alleviate that suffering and sometimes succeeds!

A history worth reading is Philip Jenkins' book *Laying Down the Sword: Why We Can't Ignore the Bible's Violent Verses*. This book will be one of our Annual Reading Course books either this year or next.

Calling Jesus "Master"

I want to address the word "Master" in this week's saying.

As we progress through Sayings Gospel Q, we are going to see that Jesus taught what we would today call anarchy. Anarchy does not mean chaos; it means



the rejecting of hierarchy. Anarchy rejects the way of domination and subjugation.

I want to be clear here. While anarchy is commonly associated with freedom, Jesus didn't teach "freedom" as we individualistically understand it today. He taught that although we are not to seek to dominate or subjugate one another, we are also not free from one another. We are connected! We are interdependent. No person is an island, and, as branches on the vine, we are all dependent on each other. Jesus taught the way of mutual aid, and he cast a vision of a world of people mutually serving each other. The hope for our world in Sayings Gospel Q is not in our devising more efficient ways of subjugating others, but in our discovering more effective ways at taking care of one another.

And yet we have this word "Master" in this week's verse. I don't believe the Jesus of Sayings Gospel Q actually wants to be anyone's "Master" or even "Lord" in the sense of an emperor or feudal baron. I see no example of Jesus grasping that kind of power in any of Sayings Gospel Q. Like all wisdom teachers, Jesus desires to lead his listeners to a better way. And I don't see him in any of the synoptic gospels wanting to dominate others. His desire was not to be served but to model what it means to serve.

Mark 10:41-45: "When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become

great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'"

Matthew 20:24-28: "When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority

over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'"

Luke 22:24-27: "A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one

[cont'd on page 5](#)

F.U.E.L.'s One-Year Anniversary

Philadelphia, PA
January 29, 2017

This past weekend I had the pleasure of being a part of a very special, one year anniversary celebration of a Christian, LGBTQ, fellowship group in Philadelphia, PA. This group is named F.U.E.L.

A little over a year ago the host of this group, Leon King (a friend of mine) contacted me with much fear and trepidation. He wanted to discuss this idea of opening his home as a safe place for his fellow Christian LGBT friends who were being excluded from their own faith congregations to meet for fellowship and to study together. We talked about what that might look like. I encouraged him. And then I drove up to Philadelphia to help him kick off their first event.

A full year has gone by now. And this past weekend this group celebrated their first anniversary. It was a beautiful time together. During the event we took a moment to go around the room and shared what this group and what 2016 meant for each of us. I listened to the stories of those in the room, as they recounted their past year and the role F.U.E.L. had played in each of their lives. I was overwhelmed. There are three faces before my mind when I write this. It is not overdramatic nor an exaggeration to state that without F.U.E.L. there is a high probability someone in the group would not have choose to keep hanging on. They wouldn't be here this year. without the love, support, and safety this small community of fellowship and love has given to them.

I led out in the study/discussion on Luke 4.18-19, a passage that is taking on more and more meaning for me with each passing day. We spoke of the relevance of this passage to this group, specifically what it means to break societal rules, laws and social norms to be a community who cares for people being injured by such. We contrasted religious piety with compassion. Then as we looked ahead to 2017, we talked about what F.U.E.L. can become in their own area to continue being a safe space for those presently vulnerable within our current social/political climate. I feel very honored to



have been given the opportunity to participate along side of this group this past weekend.

Thank you Leon, for pioneering this group and providing a location for it to meet. What you're doing matters. Following Jesus cannot be done alone by any of us. His societal changes for the outcast and margins of our world are not sustainable

unless we engage those changes together. We are connected. We are each other's fate.

We at Renewed Heart Ministries are cheering all of you on!

If you live in the Philadelphia area and would like more information on F.U.E.L. you can email us at info@renewedheartministries.com

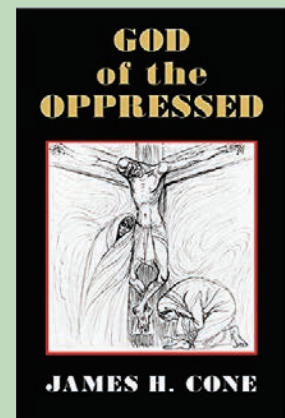
RHM's 2017 Annual Reading Course Book for March

God of the Oppressed
by James H. Cone

A five star book!

Few books are as ground-breaking or revolutionary as this one.

God of the Oppressed remains a landmark in the development of Black Theology—the first effort to present a systematic theology drawing fully on the resources of African-American religion and culture. Responding to the criticism that his previous books drew too heavily on Euro-American definitions of theology, James Cone went back to his experience of the black church in Bearden, Arkansas, the tradition of the Spirituals and black folklore, and the black history of struggle and survival, to construct a new approach to the gospel. In his reflections on God, Jesus, suffering, and liberation, Cone relates the gospel message to the experience of the black community. But a wider theme of the book is the role that social and historical context plays in framing the questions we



address to God, as well as the mode of the answers provided. Revised, including a new introduction by Cone, *God of the Oppressed* remains invaluable for scholars, students, clergy, and everyone concerned with vital, contemporary God-Talk.

James H. Cone is a Charles A. Briggs Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York. His other books include *A Black Theology of Liberation*, *God of the Oppressed*, *The Spirituals and the Blues*, and *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*.

...Master, Master cont'd from page 3

who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”

Even in John, which was written much later than the other canonical gospels and uses “Lordship” language the most, we find this narrative:

John 13:4-5: “So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.”

John 13:12-15: “When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. ‘Do you understand what I have done for you?’ he asked them. ‘You call me “Teacher” and “Lord,” and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.’”

These passages suggest to me that Jesus was much more interested in modeling and teaching a different way for us to live together as members of the human family. Even when he uses the phrase “empire of God,” he subverted the Domination Empire of his day and cast a vision for a world where people no longer dominated and subjugated each other as they did in the empires of that time.

Jesus did not emerge in Judaism only to become another in the long list of lords who practice domination. Instead, he showed us something very different.

This week’s saying is a significant challenge to today’s Christian culture. Today, we overwhelmingly emphasize verbally acknowledging Jesus as “Lord” so that a person can be assured of a post-mortem seat in the non-smoking section. Yet, in many sectors of the Christian religion, the sayings of Jesus on nonviolence, his preferential option for the poor, and his critique of domination systems are largely ignored by those who call him “Lord.” We read these sayings of Jesus in the gospels, but don’t hear them. The sayings pass right by us without substantially challenging the shape of our world. It is a very strange phenomena to me, one that I, too, used to experience.

I recently finished a book entitled *Dorothy*

Day for Armchair Theologians by Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty. If you have not read it, I recommend it. Day is an example of a modern Christian who tried to take the sayings of Jesus seriously. Day wrote, “The Gospel takes away our right forever to discriminate between the deserving and the undeserving poor.” (The Catholic Worker, May 1940) The contrast between this paradigm and the paradigm I hear from some Christians today is stark.

And yet there is hope. There are many who have woken up and are waking up to this contrast. To each of you, this week’s saying serves as encouragement. You are working in the light given off by this question: “*Why do you call me: Master, Master, and do not do what I say?*” (Q 6:46)

HeartGroup Application

This week, pick either Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount or Luke’s Sermon on the Plain. Dedicate some time to reading either one. And then, after you have read through your selection:

1. Pick a saying that you would like to lean more deeply into.
2. Research that saying, including different perspectives and interpretations of this saying. Start with a simple Google search if you don’t know where else to begin. Remember what we covered last week. Consider what fruit varying interpretations have yielded or could produce.
3. Experiment putting this saying into practice in this coming week. When you do, journal about the experience before you forget, and share your reflections with your HeartGroup when you come together.

Thank you so much for joining us this week. Let’s keep putting the sayings of Jesus into practice together, till the only world that remains is a world where only Love reigns.

I love each of you, dearly. ■



“We are not to simply **bandage** the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke **into the wheel itself.**”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer; *Letters and Papers from Prison*
(1943-1945, English publication 1967)

www.renewedheartministries.com





Watch Now

A new documentary short film series
from the producers of *Seventh-Gay Adventists*.

Select the play button below to watch
"Yeshara", our first film in the series.

#BeOutspoken

whom we have come to love here at Renewed Heart Ministries. Her name is Yeshara. May her heart, her voice, and her story encourage you, also, to #BeOutspoken. A little insider knowledge, if you will permit me one proud moment. The song Yeshara sings at the end is one of my favorites. It was inspired by a dialogue film in which I had the pleasure of participating (*Enough Room at the Table*), and because I was going to be speaking in Glendale City on the same topic. She was asked to write a song for the end of my presentations there, and this is the song she wrote. I'm so stoked that it made it into this short film.

Yeshara **Watchfire films**

It is a rare event when you have the pleasure of being friends with both the producers and the subject of a documentary film. Both are true for me in this. Watchfire films (the producers of *Seventh-Gay Adventists*) has introduced a new documentary short film series with this first inspiring episode.

Daneen Akers (co-producer) writes, "This new 'Outspoken' project is a 10-part (or more) series of short

documentary profiles of LGBT Adventists (and some parents) who are living out their faith and who they are in unique and compelling ways. The people featured in this new series are people who inspire us to contribute our verse, to let our light shine. They give us hope and joy, and we know you'll be blessed by their stories and gifts as well. The plan is to release one the first Friday night of the month throughout 2017. We have seven filmed—and one of those seven edited now!—and several more planned to film in the coming months."

This first film is about our dear friend

Yeshara, if you are reading this, we love you and we are honored to be sitting with you "at the table."

We feel very privileged to be able to help promote this new series. We'll let you know each month as they become available to view.

You can watch this first one here:
"Yeshara"

<https://vimeo.com/202429570#ComeSitNextToMe>
#BeOutspoken

#LGBTChristians #faithfullyLGBT

The *Jesus For Everyone* podcast; New episodes every Friday!

You won't want to miss a single episode!

Available for download on:

iTunes – itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/renewed-heart-ministries/id442036678?ign-mpt=uo%3D4

OR

RHM's website – renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts



Monthly Budget Goal:

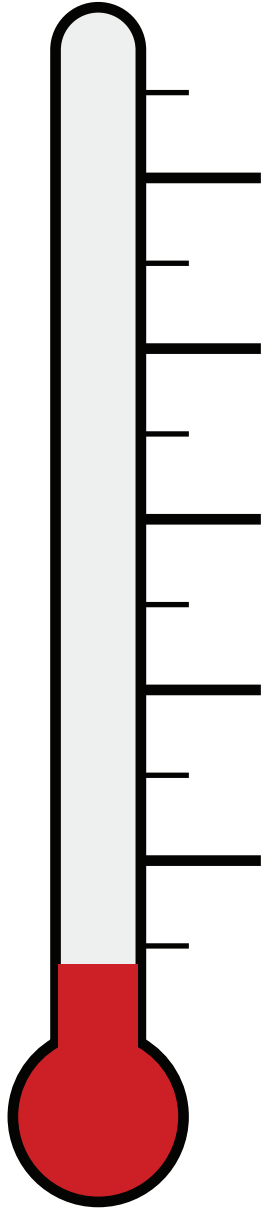
\$15,834.00

January's Contributions:

\$12,298.30

GOAL: \$190,000

2017 Annual Budget



Schedule

MARCH 24 - APRIL 1, 2017

Gardner SDA Church

Gardner, MA, USA

978.833.4308

MAY 12 - 14, 2017

Chambersburg Adventist Church

Chambersburg, PA, USA

717.491.7990

JUNE 2 - 4, 2017

McMinnville SDA Church

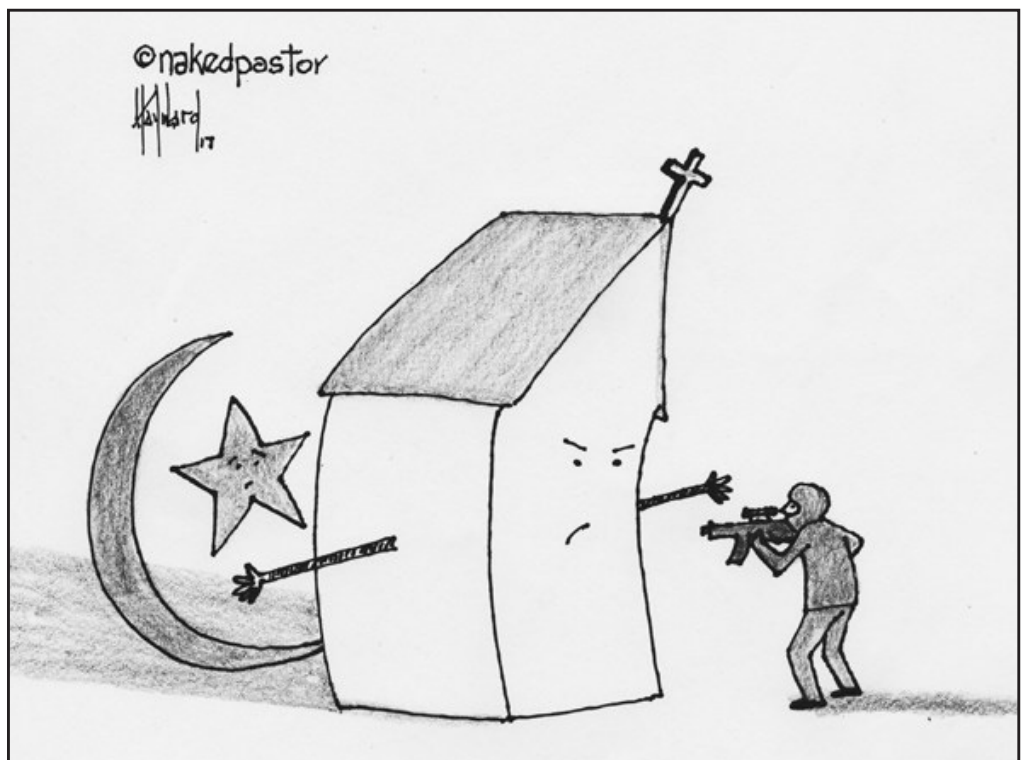
McMinnville, OR, USA

503.434.9422

Quotable Quotes

"Theology is subjective speech about God, a speech that tells us far more about the hopes and dreams of certain God-talkers than about the Maker and Creator of heaven and earth."

— James H. Cone
God of the Oppressed



amazonsmile
You shop. Amazon gives.

If you use Amazon, please remember to use Amazon Smile and select Renewed Heart Ministries as your charity to support our work at no extra cost to yourself. Or you can use this link directly:

smile.amazon.com/ch/20-8663541

Thanks in advance. Every little bit helps.

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 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.

Featured Presentation

Here and Now

by Herb Montgomery

Jesus's gospel was good news to the poor, the oppressed, the disinherited. It was not post-mortem, other-world good news. It was good news here; good news now. We must critique versions of Christianity that are radically privatized and/or intentionally removed from societal change. We must also critique interpretations of Jesus' teachings that are opiates for the vulnerable and encourage present day followers of Jesus to be passive in the face of injustice. Jesus' gospel was simple: it was people taking care of people in the here and in the now.



RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES