



αwakenings

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



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Jesus for Everyone
Podcasts

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Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery

“And it came to pass when, he ended these sayings, he entered Capernaum. There came to him a centurion exhorting him and saying: ‘My, boy is doing badly.’ And he said to him: ‘Am I, by coming, to heal him?’ And in reply the centurion said: ‘Master, I am not worthy for you to come under my roof; but say a word, and let my boy be healed. For I too am a person under authority, with soldiers under me, and I say to one: Go, and he goes, and to another: Come, and he comes, and to my slave: Do this, and he does it.’ But Jesus, on hearing, was amazed, and said to those who followed: ‘I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.’” (Q 7:1, 3, 6-9, 10)

Companion Texts:

Matthew 7:28-29: “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”

Matthew 8:5-10: “When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ‘Lord,’ he said, ‘my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Shall I come and heal him?’ The centurion replied, ‘Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, “Go,” and he goes; and that one, “Come,” and he comes. I say to my servant, “Do this,” and he does it.’ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, ‘Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.’”

Luke 7:1, 3-10: “When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum . . . The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, ‘This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and

has built our synagogue.’ So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: ‘Lord, don’t trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, “Go,” and he goes; and that one, “Come,” and he comes. I say to my servant, “Do this,” and he does it.’” When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, ‘I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.’ Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.”

To understand this portion of Sayings Gospel Q we have to look ahead in Q and see what this story prepares us for. When we first read this story, it feels out of place because Q is a collection of Jesus’s cherished sayings, not stories of his healings. In fact, this is the only healing story in Q. So why was this narrative included among the sayings? Why would the early Jewish community of Jesus followers have included this singular healing story?

But the story actually sets up the very next section of Sayings Gospel Q, which we will be looking at next month.

“And John, on hearing about all these things, sending through his disciples, said to him: ‘Are you the one to come, or are we to expect someone else?’ And in reply he said to them: ‘Go report to John what you hear and see: The blind regain their sight and the lame walk around, the skin-diseased are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised, and the poor are given good news.’ And blessed is whoever is not offended by me.” (Q 7:18-23)

The early Jesus community saw Jesus as connected to the ancient prophet Isaiah. This passage draws from statements in Isaiah’s writings including this section:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me; he has sent me to preach glad tidings to the poor, to heal the broken in heart, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind;

cont’d on page 3

The Centurion’s Faith in Jesus’ Word

Originally posted online on May 13, 2016

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

“He [or she] who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself [or she herself] does not become a monster.”

– Friedrich Nietzsche

Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

Centurion... cont'd from page 2

to declare the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of recompense; to comfort all that mourn." (Isaiah 61:1-2, LXX)

This passage sums up the initial structure of Sayings Gospel Q. First, the Spirit anoints Jesus at his baptism (Q 3:21-22). Then Jesus proclaims good news and blessings on the poor, broken, and captive (Q 6:20-49). Overall, about the first third of Sayings Gospel Q supports the early community's claim that Jesus fulfilled the hopes of Isaiah.

In this week's saying, Jesus appears in Isaiah-like fashion as a liberating healer and also as one who included those who had followed John before Jesus emerged. At this early stage of the Jesus community, Jesus's followers and John's followers would have comprised partially overlapping constituencies.

This saying also presents a very Jewish picture of Jesus. A Galilean centurion would have known quite well how a Jew would feel about entering a Gentile's home, and this tension is part of the centurion's comments in this story. Jewish sensibilities are respected, and yet the Gentile's servant is still healed.

For the early Jewish followers of Jesus to have included this story in their record of Jesus's Gospel shows that they embraced the ethic of enemy love. Centurions, most of all, would have been the people that Jewish citizens least expected to receive Isaiah's favors. The more politically radical of the Jewish community would likely have gone further and judged Centurions as worthy of YHWH's vengeance or

punishment. That sentiment could have been quite popular among the less radical as well.

Luke's Softening

Luke seems to soften this tension between Jews and Gentiles. Notice that Luke's story differs from Matthew's in that the centurion sends a delegation to Jesus rather than coming himself.

Next Luke's narrative emphasizes that this is not a normal centurion: he is different and worthy of an exception, not to be looked at in the same way as most centurions would have been:

"When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, 'This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.'"

Perhaps Luke's version was quite a bit less jarring to those who whose loved ones had been crucified, executed, or arrested by soldiers and centurions. But the Sayings Gospel Q version is much harder to swallow. It demonstrates Jesus' ethic of compassion, even compassion for one's enemy.

This material prepares the audience of Sayings Gospel Q to embrace the Jesus communities' teaching that Jesus is the "one to come." Yet this last section ran the risk of being quite offensive, possibly polarizing, and stirring up push back.

It's worth mentioning that Luke's version of this story parallels Luke's story in Acts 10, where Peter is invited to go and visit another centurion.

Matthew

Scholars believe that Matthew was written before Luke, and reflects a Jewish Galilean populace rather than the Jerusalem community addressed in Luke. John Shelby Spong in his book *Reclaiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World* reminds us that Matthew is the most Jewish of the canonical gospels. "Within about a decade, Matthew wrote the first expansion of Mark and aimed his story at the disciples of Jesus who worshiped in rather traditional Jewish synagogues. Recall once again that the split between the church and the synagogue would not occur until near the end of the ninth decade, so when Mark and Matthew were written, they and their readers were still in the traditional synagogue" (pp. 329-330). The interchange between John's disciples and Jesus, which we will cover in detail next week, calls listeners to embrace Jesus's ministry as the one expected in the scroll of Isaiah. Matthew's call expands Q and is not found in Mark

Yet if Matthew is going to use the Q story about John's disciples, then he also has to build up to it just like the Q community did. Unlike the Q community, however, he chooses not to only use the story of the centurion but also to substantiate the claim with more healing stories. Matthew adds the story of Jesus healing a leper between the Sermon on the Mount and the story of the centurion's boy to reinforce Jesus as healing liberator.

Yet in true Matthean fashion, Jesus is more than simply healer. He is even the healer of enemies. The text still emphasizes the unworthiness of this Gentile and Roman because enemy love was central to teachings found in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. Matthew incorporates the centurion story to illustrate this teaching and to characterize before Matthew's audience just what type of a liberation Jesus was announcing. He wasn't simply announcing the overthrowing of a Roman hegemony and a Jewish one in its place. No, this was a restoration of the humanity of both oppressed and oppressor. A favorite passage of mine in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* illustrates what I think is the reason for Q's and Matthew's inclusion of the centurion story:

"In order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to



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RHM's 2017 Annual Reading Course Book for May

The Civil War as a Theological Crisis

by Mark A. Noll

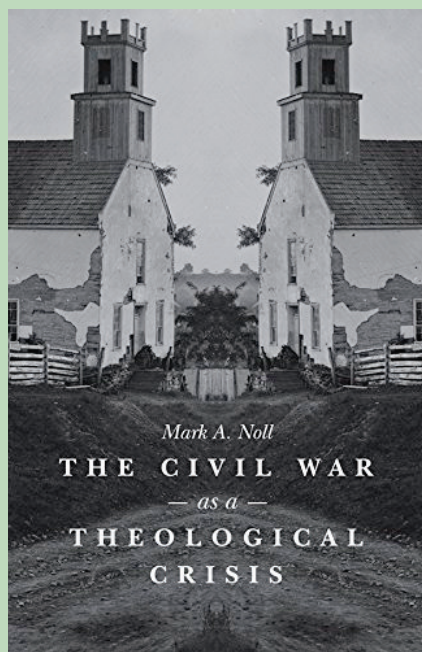
"Though the Christians on all sides agreed that the Bible was authoritative, their interpretations of slavery in Scripture led to a full-blown theological crisis."

Noll's volume is especially helpful in understanding what happens today when people calling for social change for minorities are accused of being "against the clear teachings of scripture":

"On the other front, nuanced biblical attacks on American slavery faced rough going precisely because they were nuanced. This position could not simply be read out of any one biblical text; it could not be lifted directly from the page. Rather, it needed patient reflection on the entirety of the Scriptures; it required expert knowledge of the historical circumstances of ancient Near Eastern and Roman slave systems as well as of the actually existing conditions in the slave states; and it demanded that sophisticated interpretative practice replace a commonsensically literal approach to the sacred text." Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Kindle Locations 647-649).

From *Publishers Weekly*:

"In an informative account of the theological dramas that underpinned and were unleashed by the Civil War, Noll (America's God) argues that mid-19th-century America harbored "a significant theological crisis." Quite simply, ministers disagreed about how to read the Bible—and as much as it was a result of fierce disagreements about slavery or Union, Noll says, the Civil War was a crisis over biblical



interpretation. The Bible's apparent acceptance of slavery led Christians into bitter debates, with Southern pro-slavery theologians detailing an elaborate defense of the "peculiar institution" and Northern antislavery clerics arguing that the slavery found in the Old Testament bore no resemblance to the chattel slavery of Southern plantations. Noll detours, for several chapters, to Europe, analyzing what Christians there had to say about America's sectional and scriptural debates. He suggests that religious upheaval did not evaporate at Appomattox. In the postbellum years, Americans grappled with two great problems of "practical theology": racism, and the convulsions of capitalism. This book's substantive analysis belies its brevity. As today's church debates over homosexuality reveal a new set of disagreements about how to read the Bible, this slim work of history is surprisingly timely. (Apr. 24)

Remember, if you use Amazon.com, please consider using Amazon Smile and selecting Renewed Heart Ministries as your charity to support our work at no additional cost to yourself. You can do so at: <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/20-8663541>

Quotable Quotes

"A theology of love cannot afford to be sentimental. It cannot afford to preach edifying generalities about charity, while identifying 'peace' with mere established power and legalized violence against the oppressed. A theology of love cannot be allowed merely to serve the interests of the rich and powerful, justifying their wars, their violence and their bombs, while exhorting the poor and underprivileged to practice patience, meekness, longsuffering, and to solve their problems, if at all, nonviolently. A theology of love may also conceivably turn out to be a theology of revolution. In any case, it is a theology of resistance, a refusal of the evil that reduces a brother or sister to homicidal desperation...Instead of preaching the Cross for others and advising them to suffer patiently the violence which we sweetly impose on them, with the aid of armies and police, we might conceivably recognize the right of the less fortunate to use force, and study more seriously the practice of nonviolence and humane methods on our own part when, as it happens, we possess the most stupendous arsenal of power the world has ever known."

— Thomas Merton
Toward a Theology of Resistance

regain their humanity (which is a way to create it), become oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both." (p. 44)

Who are our centurions today?

That's the million dollar question. Jesus offered neither a way of assimilating into Roman oppression nor a path that led to destruction by the Romans. His path was nonviolent resistance and the challenging ethic of genuine enemy love. This love doesn't seek vengeance against one's enemies; it seeks the transformation of that enemy. Through imagination and in whichever situations arise, this love seeks to meet our enemies on the terms of a shared humanity. Take away the system of domination and we are very much the same, and more, we are also connected. You and I both are part of this interwoven family called humanity. Barbara Deming, lesbian, poet, American feminist, and advocate of nonviolent social change, writes in her book *Revolution and Equilibrium*:

"With one hand we say to one who is angry, or to an oppressor, or to an unjust system, 'Stop what you are doing. I refuse to honor the role you are choosing to play. I refuse to obey you. I refuse to cooperate with your demands. I refuse to build the walls and the bombs. I refuse to pay for the guns. With this hand I will even interfere with the wrong you are doing. I want to disrupt the easy pattern of your life.' But then the advocate of nonviolence raises the other hand. It is raised out-stretched—maybe with love and sympathy, maybe not—but always outstretched. With this hand we say, 'I won't let go of you or cast you out of the human race. I have faith that you can make a better choice than you are making now, and I'll be here when you are ready. Like it or not, we are part of one another.' Active nonviolence is a process that holds these two realities—of noncooperation with violence but open to the humanity of the violator—in tension. It is like saying to our opponent: On the one hand (symbolized by a hand firmly stretched out and signaling, 'Stop!') 'I will not cooperate with your violence or injustice; I will resist



"There remains an experience of incomparable value . . . to see the great events of world history from **below**; from the perspective of the **outcast**, the **suspects**, the **maltreated**, the **powerless**, the **oppressed**, the **reviled** — in short, from the perspective of those who **suffer**."

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*.

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it with every fiber of my being'. And, on the other hand (symbolized by the hand with its palm turned open and stretched toward the other) 'I am open to you as a human being.'" (p.16)

As our enemies have lost sight of our humanity, we must fight, for our own sake, to not lose sight of theirs. The Jesus who healed the centurion's servant showed us the way.

HeartGroup Application

1. Take time this week to contemplate who the centurions in your life are. Who might fit this role for you?
2. What does enemy love look like for you with this person? Enemy love can take a myriad of forms. How could Deming's "first hand" change the way you relate to them? What about the "second hand" approach?
3. Discuss with your HeartGroup what you discover.

To each of you who face the challenge of affirming your own humanity while simultaneously refusing to dehumanize those who do so toward you, keep fighting. The path is not easy and maybe this is why it's referred to as "narrow."

Refuse to become like those who subjugate you. Call them to recognize you, and instead of becoming like them, call them to become more like you.

"He [or she] who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself [or she herself] does not become a monster."

—Friedrich Nietzsche

Thank you again for being alongside us on this journey.

I love each of you dearly. Keep living in love, till the only world that remains is a world where only love reigns. ■



Why I Changed My Mind About Same-Sex Relationships

People want to know why I have done what I have done—going against the teachings of my church, giving up my career as a pastor...

[Continue reading](#)

Adventist Pastor Alicia Johnston Comes Out

Last month, a dear friend of mine, Pastor Alicia Johnston, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor in Arizona, came out to her church employers and to her church constituents as queer. She also posted a video in which she discusses her resignation, affirms her identity as an Adventist, how she still feels called to ministry, her shift in her beliefs about same-sex relationships, and her journey toward affirming her own identity as

bisexual and what that means for her.

While respecting the reality that there are those who cannot be so public, we at Renewed Heart Ministries want to applaud Alicia in her decision to be public about this. As she states, "She can be." So she has chosen to do so. She expresses quite eloquently how continual silencing around this topic within the Adventist church is deeply harmful and destructive.

I've been friends with Alicia for quite some time. I'm so proud of her. I'm deeply humbled and honored to be able

to call her my friend and to have been able to journey with her in this. Alicia is right. The Gospel is about liberation. It's not simply private assurance or guilt alleviation, it's public, and it authentically engages both private and systemic injustice.

It will be exciting to watch what is next on the horizon for Alicia. We are cheering her on.

You can watch her coming out video at: <http://facebook.com/JohnstonAlicia/posts/10210483367133347>

Leave her a message of encouragement after watching. Community is how we survive in the work of transforming our world into a safe, compassionate, just home for us all. And I'm pretty sure Alicia would appreciate hearing some love from all of you.

Please check out her website where she will be continuing to share her journey, and be a resource for both LGBTQ people and their allies.

<http://aliciajohnston.site>

Alicia, if you're reading this, we love you. We are proud of you. We are beside you all the way. You're not alone.

And to all of you who support our work here at RHM, thank you.

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

"No teacher has captured my heart and mind and agreed with my idea of what the "real Jesus" is like Herb Montgomery. His teachings, full of scripture and historical facts, bring not only comfort but healing to a world fraught with blaming and judgement. Finally, I can exhale, and experience the Jesus of love and compassion and put away self-hate and guilt. What a relief. I stand with Herb Montgomery and his ministry of Love and Acceptance." — CS

"There are times in the ministry of Jesus that His total audience was one. This week, I believe I am that one. Thank you for letting the love of Jesus shine through you."

— Note received from
an attendee at a recent event

Schedule

MAY 12 - 14, 2017

Chambersburg Adventist Church
Chambersburg, PA, USA
717.491.7990

JUNE 30 - JULY 1, 2017

Kapolei
Kapolei, HI, USA
304.520.0030

JULY 6 - 8, 2017

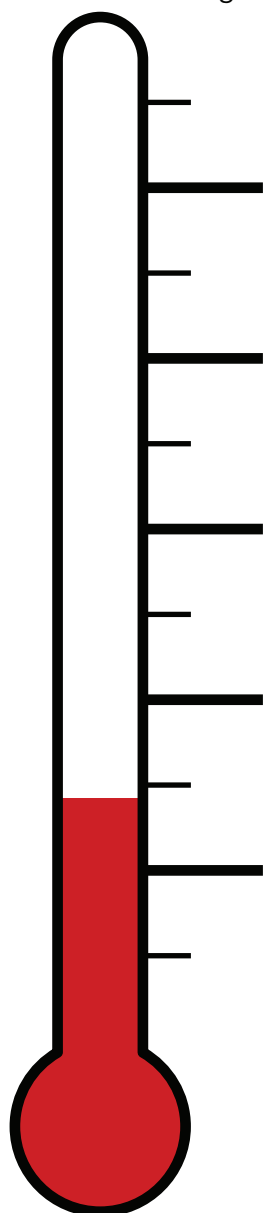
Kinship Kampmeeting
San Diego, CA, USA
304.520.0030

Monthly Budget Goal:
\$15,834.00

March's Contributions:
\$10,521.98

YTD Budget: \$47,502.07
YTD Received: \$31,764.07

GOAL: \$190,000
2017 Annual Budget



Sign Up for RHM's Free Resources!

If you are unfamiliar with Renewed Heart Ministries we are a not-for-profit group passionate about centering a set of values and ethics in the experiences of those on the undersides and margins of our societies, informed by the sayings and teachings of the historical, Jewish Jesus of Nazareth

In addition to our educational events in various locations, we offer many other resources. These include materials on our website, daily inspirational quotations (eQuotes) and/or weekly articles (eSights) received via email, and a newsletter mailed monthly to your door. You can follow us on Facebook and Twitter. You can also sign up for our news emails to be notified each time something new is available and to be notified of events happening in your area. And much, much more.

There are so many ways to take advantage of Renewed Heart Ministries' resources. If you have not signed up to take advantage of these, we invite you do to so at the link below. *And they are all free!*

renewedheartministries.com/Contact-forms?form=EmailSignUp

If you'd like to find out more about Renewed Heart Ministries, you can do at: renewedheartministries.com/Who-is-RHM

And for all those supporting our work, thank you. Without you we could not continue our participation in the work of shaping our world into a safe, just, compassionate home for us all. We are in this together, and together we are making a difference.

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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.

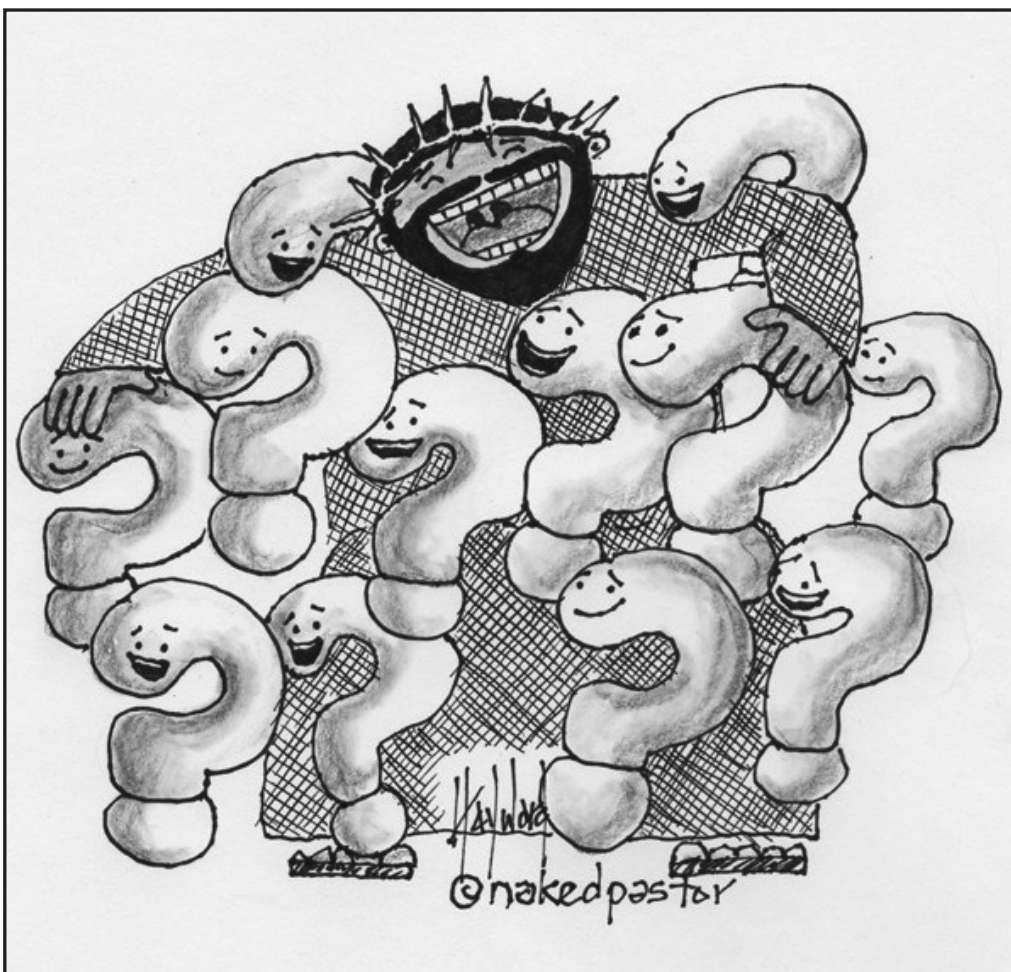


RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

Featured Presentation

Overtured Tables and Hope

Overturning the religious legitimization of oppressing others will always produce push back and sometimes even a cross. What was accomplished through the unjust execution of Jesus was undone and reversed through the resurrection. Hope was reborn through the good news of Jesus' resurrection, a renewed hope that the teachings of this Jesus could indeed heal our world. It's our hope that your heart will be renewed and empowered to continue following the teachings of Jesus as you listen this month—***Overtured Tables and Hope*** by Herb Montgomery.



The Jesus For Everyone podcast

New episodes every Friday!

You won't want to miss a single episode.

Find them on iTunes:

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

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