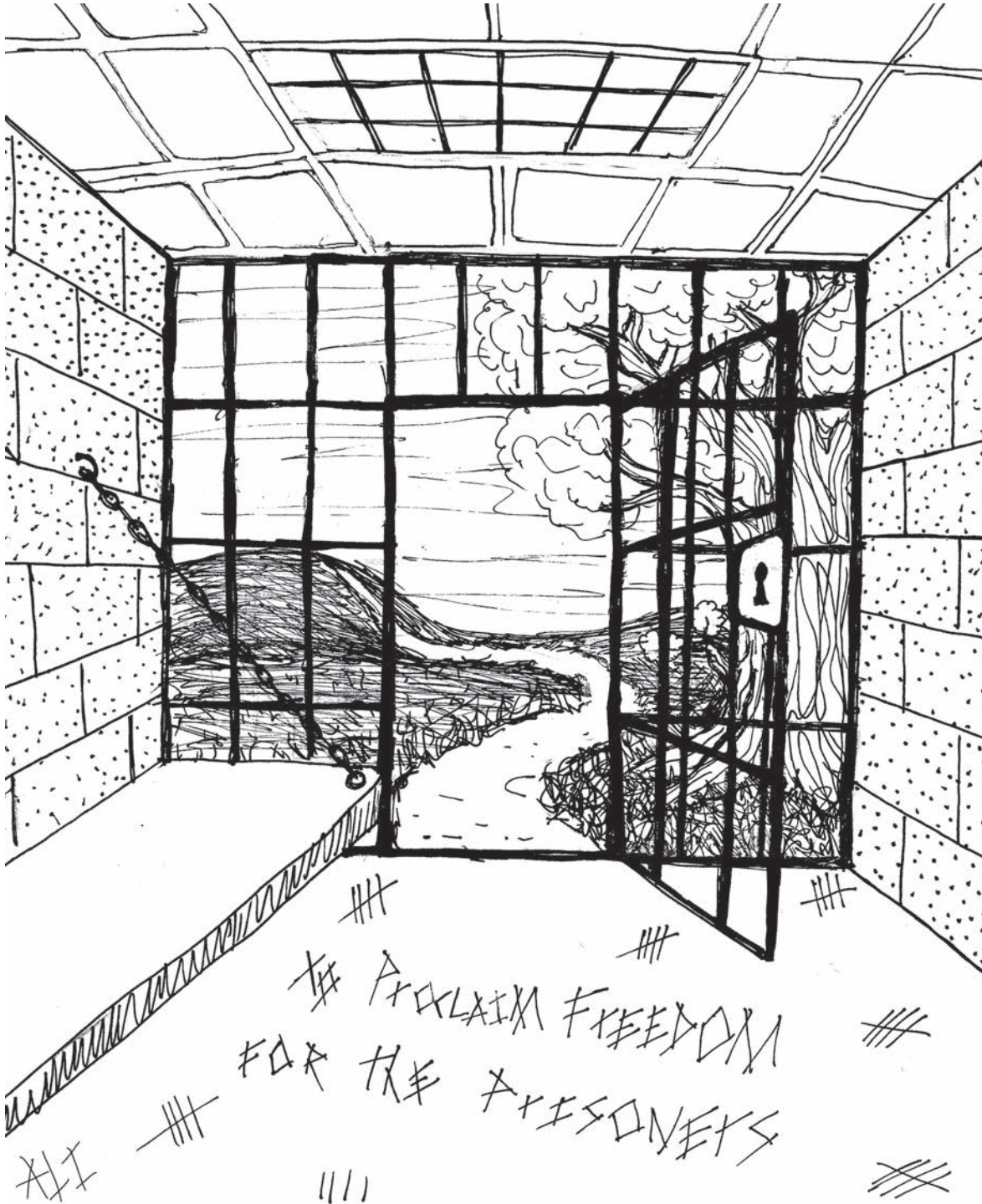




RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

αwakenings

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



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Jesus for Everyone Podcasts

Renewed Heart Ministries

P.O. Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901

Phone: 304.520.0030

Email: info@renewedheartministries.com

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@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery

500:25:1

500:25:1

A new way to participate in the RHM community

Over the last six months, I've spent hours talking with pastors whose churches have invited me to speak around the US. These pastors have had to cancel my seminars at the last minute, even though, in some cases, they've been waiting for me to speak for years!

One head elder's congregation had been on the waiting list for three years before they were forced to cancel. He told me, "The journey to know God is not always easy."

He's right.

My seminars are being cancelled by church gatekeepers who are afraid. They're afraid of conversations that might challenge and change their members. Pastors and congregations across the country want our ministry and message to come to them. They've invited me to speak and they want to learn. But gatekeepers are standing in the way.

In one town this year, when a pastor refused to cancel an invitation to me, a few well-funded critics used their conference ministerial department to strong-arm the pastor. These people threatened to stop tithing to their conference if I was allowed to speak in their church!

The conference president told me that they

wanted to have me, but couldn't risk losing their members' tithes and would have to hope for another opportunity in the future.

We can give congregations that future opportunity today.

Renewed Heart Ministries edifies and educates. We teach people how their faith can concretely impact the suffering in our world. We are passionate about rediscovering, following, and helping others to rediscover the teachings and sayings of the historical Jesus. We believe his teachings have an intrinsic value in informing our work of making our world a safe, more just, more compassionate home for us all.

So we are taking our educational weekends on the road! We'll hold weekend seminars in areas where we're desperately wanted and we'll do it without having to go through gatekeepers.

We'll be hosting face-to-face weekend events all across the nation starting this August. I wanted you to hear about it first.

We're so excited!

Our first venue is in Asheville, North Carolina. We've already rented the space and the weekend we have chosen is August 4-5.

Sign up to support these new events at: <http://bit.ly/RHM500Support>



John's Inquiry About the One to Come

Originally posted online on May 20, 2016

by Herb Montgomery

"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)

Companion Texts:

Matthew 11:2-6: "When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?' Jesus replied, 'Go back and report to John what you hear

and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.'"

Luke 7:18-23: "John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?' When the men came to Jesus, they said, 'John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"' At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, 'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good

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Why make this change?

Our weekend events tangibly change people's lives!

"Thank you for coming and sharing with us about God. Your talks have given me hope. You've given me a new way to see God, to understand myself, and to treat others."

—D.D.; Washington

"Your message has kept me from giving up because of my previous view of God. God has given you a gift of presenting who Jesus reveals Him to be." — S.J.; Oregon

"Thank you for helping me regain a beautiful picture of Jesus and our Father."

— C.S.; North Carolina

"This ministry shows me God like I've never seen Him before, and at the same time challenges me to my core and calls to me to rethink things and ultimately to change."

— K.G.; Missouri

"There are times in the ministry of Jesus that His total audience was one. This week, I believe I am that one."

— Anonymous Note; California

"I have listened to many of your talks, and I just really wish my church could have you visit and share." — K.D.; Massachusetts

With your support for these new gatherings, we'll be able to work where people can be challenged, changed, inspired to make a difference in their own communities.

When will RHM come to my area?

So many of you have asked this already! I love meeting the people of RHM and I can't wait to be able to schedule a weekend of teaching in your area with YOU! If you would like us to come to your area, drop us a line at:

<http://bit.ly/RHMSeminar>

What will these gatherings cost?

These events will continue to be free of charge. Freely we have received, and so we want to continue giving freely too.

At many locations we will take collections to offset the costs. In other venues, that won't be possible. This is where *YOU* come in.

These 500:25:1 events will cost more than our traditional seminars, where organizations that invite us cover our travel expenses and host us. For these weekends, Renewed Heart Ministries will have to cover travel and space rental costs.

How can I help?

Be one of **500 people** who'll support Renewed Heart Ministries with a donation of **\$25 or more each month** for this new project—for **one year**!

To sign up go to:

<http://bit.ly/RHM500Support>

What will I get in return?

You'll know you've made it possible for others to explore the liberating gospel of Jesus in locations that **RHM wouldn't normally be able to visit**. We'll also be able to visit you!

Let us know if you'd like Renewed Heart Ministries to host a weekend in your town and we'll add it to the calendar!

Request Seminar in your area at:

<http://bit.ly/RHMSeminar>

With your support, we'll also be able to partner with other speakers and authors. I can't wait to invite new voices to share with our community from time to time.

Can we count on you to be one of 500 folks who partner with us for 500:25:1?

Thank you so much for helping us to take this next step!

Sign up at: <http://bit.ly/RHM500Support>

With much love and gratitude,



Herb Montgomery
Director | Author | Speaker
Renewed Heart Ministries

John's Inquiry... cont'd from page 2

news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

Isaiah 35:5-6: "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert."

As we discussed briefly last month, the story of the centurion, Jesus as a healer, and the liberation sayings of Jesus in the gospel narratives all led up to embracing Jesus as the "one to come."

The blind regain their sight.

The lame walk around.

The skin-diseased are cleansed.

The deaf hear.

The dead are raised.

The poor receive good news.

Jesus is the proof of these liberatory hopes

and expectations. Yet there are two kinds of liberation here. One is physical, and the other is economic. Understanding this is one of the hooks that prevents me holding on to the Jesus story. Yes, the Jesus story includes supernatural healing stories. Yet its primary focus is not Jesus the miracle worker, nor Jesus the magician, but rather the Jesus the liberator of the suffering, the poor, the oppressed, the disinherited, and the marginalized. Liberation is the genus of his ministry, and physical healing and economic healing are two distinct species.

It's worth noting that the original Jesus followers were not post-modern, modern, or post Enlightenment people as we are. They were a product of their own times, and the Jewish world view they subscribed to most was a Jewish apocalyptic worldview. (I have written on the tenets of Jewish apocalypticism; please see *An End of the World Savior versus Present Liberator*.)



As we've shared before, the apocalyptic worldview, influenced by Zoroastrianism, saw this world as the visible expression of a much larger, behind-the-scenes, cosmic conflict between forces of good and evil: earthly political and physical forces were only the extension of that cosmic conflict. Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, Greece, and Rome would all have been viewed by Jewish apocalypticists as simply the puppet-empires of YHWH's and Israel's cosmic enemies.

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John's Inquiry... cont'd from page 3

They applied this belief in cosmic war to physical illness and disabilities as well. They had no understanding of germ theory or physiology, or even the insight modern people have into anatomy. If someone was sick, for example, it was the work of unseen cosmic forces from which the person's need was liberation. Healing, was not supernatural, but rather liberating, about an assumed relationship between a seen effect and its unseen cause.

For Jesus to be a liberator in the way that his original audience would have understood it, Jesus' liberation had to include economic and political liberation. The fact that it also included physical healing classified Jesus as a complete liberator in an apocalyptic dualist sense as well. This would have been deeply significant in their 1st Century setting.

A Noteworthy Transition

There is a noteworthy difference between the traditional apocalyptic liberator and the Jesus of the Jesus story, however.

Sayings Gospel Q begins with John announcing a coming judgment.

"He said to the crowds coming to be, baptized: 'Snakes' litter! Who warned you to run from the impending rage? So bear fruit worthy of repentance, and do not presume to tell yourselves: We have as forefather Abraham! For I tell you: God can produce children for Abraham right out of these rocks! And the ax already lies at the root of the trees. So every tree not bearing healthy fruit is to be chopped down and thrown on the fire. I baptize you in water, but the one to come after me is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to take off. He will baptize you in Spirit and fire. His pitchfork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn on a fire that can never be put out.'" (Q 3:7-9; 16b-17)

Just as the apocalyptic world view viewed visible agents on earth as conduits of cosmic good or evil forces, John's statement also looked forward to a dualistic judgment where the earthly oppressed conduits of cosmic good would be vindicated and liberated while their earthly oppressors, viewed as conduits of cosmic evil, would be judged, punished and destroyed. He foresaw liberation for the oppressed but vengeance on oppressors.

Sayings Gospel Q shows a transition from John's more punitive liberating judgment to Jesus's restorative liberation: for Jesus, the humanity of both the oppressed and the oppressors would be restored. (See last month's newsletter to recall how this story

relates to the story of the centurion.)

The liberation represented in the sayings of Jesus was not justice for the disinherited and vengeance on their enemies, but a liberation marked by the healing or restoration of both sides, the subjugated as well as the subjugators. Jesus's liberation called people away from the dehumanizing way of domination, where we endlessly create more and more effective ways of achieving power and control over others. He instead cast before our imaginations a world of mutual aid and resource sharing, where we together work to survive and then thrive as members of an interconnected human family.

When one couples this description of what the liberation of Jesus looked like—healing, restoration, liberation, and good news to the poor—with last month's section of the gospel narrative, the point becomes stark. Jesus emerges not as a liberator wielding mass destruction on enemies, but as a liberator who works through restoration, healing, and

even the nonviolent transformation of one's enemies. It's a humanizing liberation for all.

Granted, those who benefit from the way of domination (i.e. the dominators or those who participate in some way) don't see this as good news today and didn't in Jesus's time either. As Peter Gomes stated in his book, *The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus*, Jesus's statement that "The last will be first, and the first will be last," "is counterintuitive to our cultural presuppositions [but] is invariably good news to those who are last, and at least problematic news to those who see themselves as first" (p. 42). What is good news to the people at the bottom of the social pyramid will never be perceived as good news to those at the top.

Jesus's liberation was also problematic to those among the people who thought violent revolution was their only hope. A nonviolent revolution did not seem very promising in the 1st Century; remember, this was before Gandhi and others

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RHM's 2017 Annual Reading Course Book for June

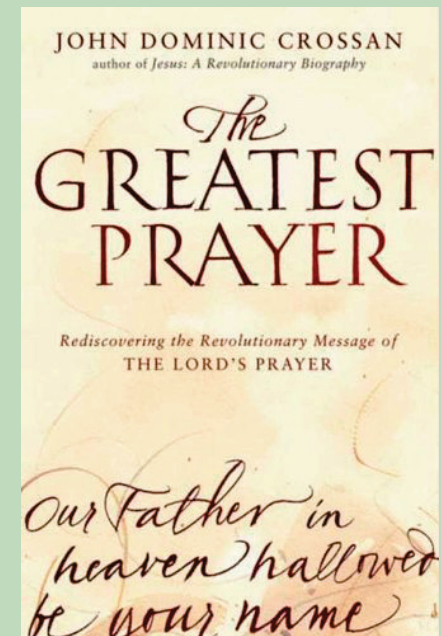
The Greatest Prayer: Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of the Lord's Prayer

by John Dominic Crossan

"Every [weekend] the Lord's Prayer echoes in churches around the world.

It is an indisputable principle of Christian faith. It is the way Jesus taught his followers to pray and distills the most essential beliefs required of every one of the world's 2.5 billion Christians. In *The Greatest Prayer*, our foremost Jesus scholar explores this foundational prayer line by line for the richest and fullest understanding of a prayer every Christian knows by heart.

An expert on the historical Jesus, Crossan provides just the right amount of history, scholarship, and detail for us to rediscover why this seemingly simple prayer sparked a revolution. Addressing issues of God's will for us and our response, our responsibilities to one another and to the earth, the theology of our daily bread, the moral



responsibilities that come with money, our nation-states, and God's kingdom, Crossan reveals the enduring meaning and universal significance of the only prayer Jesus ever taught."

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>

John's Inquiry... cont'd from page 4

demonstrated how nonviolence could work. Though it may seem otherwise, liberation rooted in enemy love and transformation rather than the mass destruction of one's enemies is good news.

Matthew and Luke both use the narrative of John's disciples to connect Jesus' liberation of the poor and oppressed with the liberation Isaiah looked forward to. Matthew includes this theme in his expansion of Mark, and Luke expands this theme even more so in his own gospel. An example of Luke's greater emphasis on liberation is the story only found in Luke from Luke 4:16-20 where Jesus (who by all cultural expectation should have been illiterate) actually reads from Isaiah itself (cf. Isaiah 61:1-2).

For Q, Matthew and Luke, Jesus is the long awaited arrival of the liberation that Israel had been looking forward to since the days of Isaiah. Isaiah 35:5-6 states, "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert." But the nature or character of Isaiah's liberation brought its own set of challenges, some of which we have mentioned here. One element of the liberation found in Isaiah, which would have been and still is very puzzling for many, was the image of the suffering servant.

It's important to realize that the Jesus of the gospels is not inventing nonviolence. He is simply taking the nonviolence in Isaiah seriously. He is leaning into it, exploring where it could lead if skillfully and intentionally applied to his own day and the dynamics between Rome and the Jewish poor.

Healing Versus Destruction

Today, we must be careful in both religious and secular settings not to describe the liberation we're working toward as a vision of destroying people who oppose our work. Our goal is not to destroy our enemies but to transform them. John the Baptist's "one to come" was a destroyer, separating humanity and bringing fire upon the chaff. But Jesus doesn't quite line up with that description, and it causes John to question whether the people should be "looking for another." Jesus teaches John that his liberation was quite different:



it was to be a different "recompense." Jesus's liberating ministry is characterized by the healing, restoration and a radical change in the lives of those the status quo impoverished, for sure, but it was also to be a radical change in humanizing even the oppressors.

Rome had already made life a desert for the majority of Jewish citizens through violent oppression. Jesus did not come as another destroyer promising peace, but as a teacher showing the path toward liberation, life, and healing. He pointed the way to a world where, as Isaiah and Micah had hoped, there was enough for everyone.

"Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the YHWH from Jerusalem. He will govern between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." (Isaiah 2:3-4)

"Many nations will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid for the LORD Almighty has spoken. (Micah 4:2-4, emphasis added.)

This is a world that can be characterized as a safer, more just, more compassionate home for us all where all injustice, oppression and violence has been put right.

Jewish Jesus in the 1st Century has any relevance to our world of corporatism, militarism, bigotry, and fear. Many in Jesus's Galilean audience desperately longed for a change from Roman imperialist tyranny. And Jesus offered a path rooted in our interconnectedness with each other; a

cont'd on page 7



The Widmers

Watchfire films

A new segment of the *Outspoken* series has been released. We are beyond words excited to be helping to promote this one. Crystal and I are friends with Pastor Kris and Debbie. They are dear to our hearts, and it is our hope that their story moves you as it has us.

This is the Widmers' story.

From Watchfire Films:

"It's such a joy to share the new "Outspoken" segment featuring Pastor Kris and Debbie Widmer. They are the parents of a transgender daughter, and they share their emotional and spiritual journey, challenges, and changing perspective in such a moving and vulnerable way that we know they are going to help other parents with children who are gender and sexual minorities know that they are not alone.

Parents of LGBTQ children often isolated

Parents of LGBTQ children in the church have no support structures within the church and usually go in a "second closet" themselves when their children come out. They are aware of the misinformation and stereotypes that are rampant in the church due to the general silence around this topic (or worse, terrible fear-tactics like "bathroom bills" that scapegoat transgender people like their children) and they feel keenly that they will be judged and ostracized. That's what happened to the Widmers who felt incredibly isolated and alone when their child first came out to them as transgender while in graduate school.

Pastor Kris Widmer has worked for the Adventist Church for 32 years, but in their time of crisis, who can they talk to? Where can they turn? Where is any information or help other than a policy document that only serves to further

isolate and turn transgender people and their families away?

The Widmers are willing to share their story now to try to help families have resources so they can respond better. As Kris says at one point, "Where is the pamphlet from the family ministries department, 'So you have a transgender child...these are some things you should know. Number one, you are going to go through a grief process. Number two, don't push your child away. It's better to have a living transgender child than to stand over the casket of your child...that pamphlet needs to be produced.'"

New Territory

While we've been editing this piece, we keep noting that we haven't seen anything like this before. There has not been much listening to parents of LGBTQ children at all (not a surprise given how little LGBTQ people are listened to, so their families also tend to be under heard too).

Give their story a listen. Not only is their process as parents moving and eye-opening, but where they've landed is something we hope other families can see as a hopeful model.

The Widmers are willing to talk to other parents of LGBT children because they know how very few people are safe and can truly get what other parents go through. If you want to connect with them or know parents who would, email me (just reply to this newsletter), and we will put you in touch. We also can help connect family members to SDA Kinship's Family outreach."

#BeOutspoken

Schedule

JULY 6 - 8, 2017

Kinship Kampmeeting
San Diego, CA, USA
304.520.0030

AUGUST 4-5, 2017

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Asheville, NC, USA
304.520.0030

AUGUST 19, 2017

Jesus Untangled: North Carolina
Hickory, North Carolina
714.333.7574



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smile.amazon.com/ch/20-8663541

Thanks in advance. Every little bit helps.

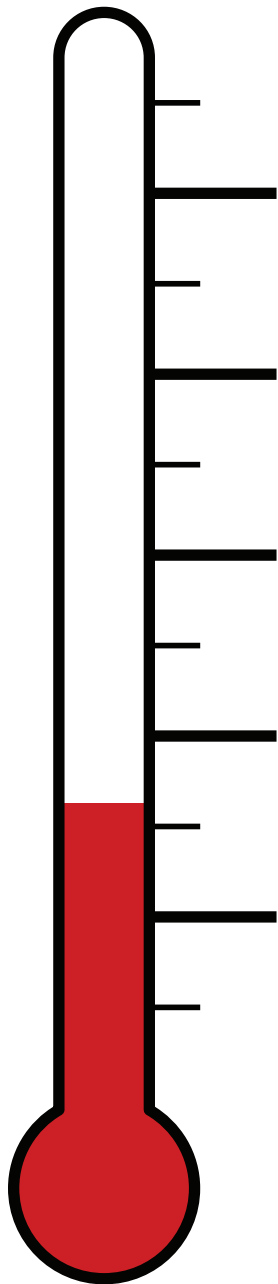
Monthly Budget Goal:
\$15,834.00

April's Contributions:
\$6,673.79

YTD Budget: \$63,336.00

YTD Received: \$38,437.86

GOAL: \$190,000
2017 Annual Budget



John's Inquiry... cont'd from page 5

subversive way that called us to take up the work of making our world a safer home for us all.

To each of you on this path of healing and restoration as opposed to the path of destruction: may this month's section of Q encourage and confirm you in the energy you invest in those around you:

"...the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor..." (*Sayings Gospel Q* 7:18-23)

Whatever portion of the work you are investing your time in, be of courage. Together we are making a difference in bringing liberation to the lives of those who are suffering.

HeartGroup Application

This week, go back and review John's description of what he thought Jesus would be and the gospel writers' description of

what Jesus actually was.

1. Try listing at least five contrasts between the two.
2. Do you see these contrasting visions in contemporary religious groups of people who value the Jesus story? Which some communities do you see continuing John the Baptist's work, warning of a coming destruction, living an ascetic life, and crying out repent? Which communities do you sense are focused on healing and liberation from suffering today? Which communities, like the one I grew up, are a hybrid of both?
3. Discuss with your HeartGroup how you can lean into being a community centered in healing and restoration, and pick at least one action step from your discussion to begin implementing.

We are in this together, and there's still so much work to do. Thank you for being on this journey of transformation and restoration, too. Keep living in love till the only world that remains is a world where *only* love reigns. ■

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 to do so at the link below. *And they are all free!*

<https://renewedheartministries.com/Contact-forms?form=EmailSignUp>

If you'd like to find out more about Renewed Heart Ministries, you can do at: <https://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.

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.

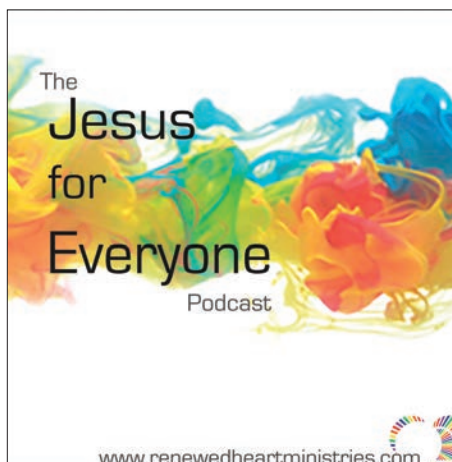


RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

Featured Presentation

There is a difference between a gospel about Jesus and the gospel Jesus himself taught. Jesus' gospel, his announcement of good news, was an invitation to enter what was called the kingdom or reign of God. He defined this new human society as a society where people trust that people will take care of them in the future so that they can be the one who is taking care of another person today. Simply put, Jesus' reign of God is people taking care of people. It's our hope that your heart will be renewed and your desire to follow the teachings of Jesus deepened as you listen to this month's featured presentation: **Jesus' Gospel** 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

or on RHM's website:

renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts